













# BROKEN BUTTERFLIES

**By Henry Malsworth Kinney**

**THE CODE OF THE KARSTENS**

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BY  
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## CHAPTER I

The black bow of the *Tenyo Maru* cut into the broad ribbon of moonlight stretching, interminably, straight into the vast spaces of the opalescent night. Somewhere ahead, bathed in that same pale illumination, invisible, lay Japan.

Arms folded over the rail, Hugh Kent looked forward into the opaque dimness. From the main deck below the plaint of a bamboo flute came softly up to him. The following wind brought stray bits of the dance music from astern where the cabin passengers were enjoying their last night at sea. Ahead the Orient, dim, mysterious, indefinitely veiled as the flute notes — behind him the virile, strident, restless clamor of the West; ever approaching, the two, East and West, seeking to blend, even partly blending, yet each as yet too strongly individual, mutually strange, to combine in full harmony.

The vastness of space, vagueness of translucent darkness, shimmer of niveous sparkle of foam cascaded before the tall prow and glimmer of phosphorescence flickering in the dark water below, all induced to introspection, reflection, vague wonder as to what lay before him, what new revelations would life in Japan bring to him.

It had surely changed vastly in the score of years which had passed since he had left it, at fifteen. He



would find much that he knew though, would enjoy recapturing fluency in the speech which he had prattled expertly as a toddler in amah's care and as a boy in the streets and gardens of Kyoto. It would be a new, a more sophisticated Japan that he would see, spoiled without doubt; still how he had longed for years to return, to rediscover.

A shadow fell over his thoughts. How he had cherished that dream, a few years ago, during the first years of their marriage, to go there with Isabel. How they had both looked forward to it, to the time when he should attain a post as correspondent at Tokyo for one of the great dailies, to which his knowledge of the language gave him good reason to aspire. Even after the first years of marriage had passed, when in time they had gradually drifted apart, had become almost indifferent, he had hoped that when Japan should provide a new scene for their lives, it might be possible to revive interest, to make a new start. He had felt that it contained some vague potentiality of that sort, and when the offer came from the *San Francisco Herald* to be its Tokyo correspondent, he had felt certain that the opportunity had come for them, that she would appreciate it as well as he. For that reason he had said nothing to her about it until every arrangement had been made, the contract signed, that he might carry the glad tidings to her, complete, that the realization of all that this meant to them might sweep her off her feet and envelop her, as it had him. And then the shock of her absolute coldness, when he had brought his surprise to her; her absolute refusal to go to Japan. It had thrown him off his feet, confused him, so that when she reproached him with secrecy, with having taken this important step without even consulting her, trying to learn her wishes, he had been able to explain only confusedly how with

the very best intentions he had meant to give her a splendid surprise; how, in fact, he had had to restrain himself from telling her when the first inkling of the great news came, just in order that he might make the marvel of the revelation more complete. As he had tried to justify himself, to explain, to convince her, her indifference had baffled him — surely, commonplace and torpid as their relations had become, he had never felt towards her the indifference which she apparently felt towards him. And this had been followed by her absolute refusal to go with him, accompanied by her statement that she did not object to his going, that, in fact, she could understand that he must not lose the great opportunity, that it really might be for the best for both of them to live apart for some time, for some years — she had veiled her speech in obscure indefiniteness, giving him, suddenly, the impression that she expected that they would never come together again.

It had been borne in on him that in her heart she welcomed this as an opportunity to end, through propitious circumstance, a relationship which had become apathetic, a marriage which had failed. He could understand her feeling — the thought was not unfamiliar to him — but she had evidently progressed much farther than had he on the road of indifference. Further conversations had brought the same result. She had resolutely refused to place credence in his belief that life in a new country might revive affection. She was not romantic, she had said, and it was plain that separation would cause neither of them to suffer. He had felt that had she given him but a little encouragement, the slightest sympathy, he might ardently have swept her over to his belief that here lay a chance for renewal of the affection of the first years; but her indifference had chilled him.

So they had parted, phlegmatically. Now he felt certain that this episode had come to an end. He had tried marriage, and it had been a failure. And such a stupid failure. There had been no other woman, and, he felt sure, no other man. It had failed simply through inanition. Still, it might have been worse. At least, there was no heartbreak, no anguish. He had tried the marriage experiment. Probably he would never have been content until he had tried it. Now, he had found that it did not work; yet he was not much the worse. He enjoyed the company of women only in the manner of a mild stimulant. Thus he would live henceforth. He would have his new work to occupy him, and curiosity to lift the curtain veiling the mystery of marriage would not affect him. Like men who regard lack of desire for liquor as an asset, thus he felt that his freedom from relation to, from craving for woman would be an advantage. It would make for a peaceful and well-ordered life.

His thoughts lost themselves in indefiniteness, a pleasant Nirvana of emptiness which resented the sound of footsteps approaching along the deck behind him. He turned, annoyed. Still, it was not so bad. He would rather have it be Lüttich than any of the others. The Russian had a fortunate faculty of sympathetic adjustment, of ever being able to attune himself to one's mood of the moment, serious, gay, reflective. And he admired his talents, the facility with which he spoke French, German, English, even Japanese, his easy mastery of the violin, and, above all, his unobtrusive friendliness. He felt for him, also, sympathy for his misfortunes and admiration for the careless manner in which he had adapted himself to new circumstances. Hardships as an officer during the war, imprisonment, escape through Siberia, and, finally, adjustment to a fairly precarious existence as a teacher

of languages and the violin to Japanese, had caused no bitterness. "You never know what it is to be free from care until you have lost everything," he had explained to Hugh. "*Nichivo!*"

Lüttich pointed out into the night before them. "To-morrow, Japan. What will it bring?"

Hugh smiled. "Something like that. One dreams, reflects, speculates at the future."

The Russian snapped his fingers. "Unprofitable. If the dreams are pleasant, disappointment and disillusionment follow. If they are unpleasant, why, they are not worth having. The true philosophy lies in gathering the fullest measure of the pleasures of the moment. This is the last night on board, remember. They are short of men, as usual. Come on. Join the dance, and have a drink with me, *auf wiedersehen* in Japan."

They walked aft together, where the ship's orchestra played to the couples dancing in the obscure half-light of the moon and the Japanese lanterns strung criss-cross in wavy lines. Along the wall of the deckhouse tables and chairs had been set close together so as to give room for the dancers. They sat down and had their drink. Hugh was still half immersed in reverie, but the Russian was active, febrile. Presently he joined the dancers. Hugh watched the scene languidly. He could always find enjoyment, food for idle speculation in the odd assortment of passengers, international, Americans and Japanese predominating; some falling into easily defined classes, missionaries, business men, tourists; others more definitely characteristic, individualistic; some particularly interesting in their baffling of curiosity, about whom ship's gossip had contrived fanciful fables.

At the table next to him sat Baron Saiki, returning after years of service at the Japanese Embassy at

Washington, man of the world, polyglot, marvelously well informed in international politics, a striking contrast to his wife, who spoke little and who appeared to have retained, in spite of years of residence abroad, the self-effacement of Japanese women. Another contrast, again, was young Miss Suzuki, who sat with them, college educated in America, stylish, with even a French-like chic, in her fashionable gown and cleverly arranged hair. Farther over was Miss Wilson, an American stenographer returning to Yokohama, after a vacation in California, with Miss Elliott, who had lived long in Japan where she was beginning to make a success with her painting, water colors following largely the manner of the Japanese color prints, but combining therewith a hint of Maxfield Parrish, with intense blues and deft arrangement of light and shadow contrast, which she cleverly contrived to work out into a style quite peculiarly her own. She was one of the passengers whom Hugh hoped he would meet again in his life in Japan.

Still farther over was a group of tourists, guide-books on the table before them, arranging the itinerary for a breathless chase through the most conspicuous marvels of Japan. Then a table with a couple of girls with bobbed hair, and a youth on his way to Shanghai. Farther over were others whose faces were half effaced in the shadows. The approach to land caused general animation. The dancers swung and gyrated to the rhythm of jazz. Good-bys were said and promises to meet in Japan made as drinks more numerous than usual marked the last night at sea.

"Are you glad to come back to Japan?"

It was Miss Suzuki who had turned to him. She spoke in Japanese. He had often practiced speaking the language with her, rejoicing at the facility with which he was regaining the once familiar tongue.

"Of course, though to me it will be like a new country," he answered. "But I know that you must certainly be happy to return."

He was surprised to see the wistful expression which came over her face. "I don't know." She spoke in English. He had noticed that she found greater facility therein than in Japanese. "I don't know. I was only eight when I left Japan. I am afraid I have become too foreign in my ways and my mind, and my parents are such old-fashioned Japanese. It may be very difficult; I am really quite afraid."

The orchestra crashed into a new dance. From the dimness beyond the lanterns the ship's Adonis strode into the light, a young fellow on his way to Tokyo as a student interpreter. He walked towards Miss Wilson. Hugh saw her straighten expectantly, eyes meeting the boy. But Adonis' roving eye had perceived Miss Kanae, a Japanese girl who with her parents had joined the ship at Honolulu. He changed direction, bowed, smiled, and the two glided in among the dancing couples.

Miss Wilson flushed angrily. Her glance swept away, encountered his for a moment, took in his companion with obvious disapproval.

"I don't see how a white man can bring himself to dance with one of these."

It was said loudly enough to carry across the tables. Evidently intentionally, with a desire to wound. Hugh saw the Baron wince almost imperceptibly. He knew that the girl at his side must have heard. The orchestra fiddled on to a crashing finish. The dancers called for an encore. The violins struck up again. Hugh turned to her.

"I wish you would let me have this dance, Miss Suzuki?"

He saw her flush. "I think I would rather not. I

did not think you danced. I have not seen you dance at all."

"I have not." He did not care greatly for dancing. "But this is the last night, you know. Surely you will not deny me this one dance at parting."

She hesitated. He bowed ceremoniously. She arose slowly, and he led her out among the dancers. He was pleased to find how lightly she danced, elfin-like fine and graceful movements following his. The glare of Miss Wilson's eyes directly into his as they passed her gave him grim satisfaction. He knew that she knew what was in his mind. She would be implacable. How easy it was to make enemies in this world. He danced mechanically. The thought spoiled his enjoyment. Then his mind reverted to his partner. She was smiling up to him. What a shame it was to wound wantonly such a dainty child, for, after all, that was all she was.

"We shall dance often like this, in Japan, shall we not?"

"I don't know." Her smile became a little dubious. "I hope so. We shall see."

He made up his mind that he must try to come into touch with her in Tokyo. The music ceased. He led her back to her seat. The Baron smiled. "You will have a drink with me before we go below, Mr. Kent. It is getting late, but we shall have our nightcap." They drank slowly. "I hope to see you in Tokyo," said the Baron. "Your business will take you to the Foreign Office very often, I know. I expect to be in Japan for a while. Look me up there. I may be of some use to you. Good night."

After all, how easy it was to make friends, also.

They arose. The Baroness bowed to him silently. The girl gave him her hand. "Good night. *Arigato de gozaimazu.*" She smiled to him and followed the

others before he could collect himself to reply. She was a charming child. He hoped that he would come to know her better, in Japan.

The Russian came up to him. "Good boy." He patted him on the shoulder. So others had noticed. He looked over for the Wilson girl, but she had disappeared. Miss Elliott caught his glance, beckoned him over.

"You throw yourself into the battle quickly, even before you have reached Japan," she smiled. "You have chosen your side early. It may not be entirely wise, but I liked it. Thank you."

It embarrassed him. "But surely it was the only thing to do, you know. She heard it. It was so unexpected, so utterly undeserved."

"I know. Still, you will see much of just that kind of thing in Japan. I feel sorry for that poor girl. She will have a hard time, and she suspects it. You know, she went to America when she was only eight years old, was adopted by her uncle and aunt. They sent her to college. She has been thoroughly foreignized. Now they have both died and she is going back to her own family. I know of them. Her brothers have both been abroad and have the foreign manner, but they are Japanese. She is nothing, neither Japanese nor foreign, or, rather, she is both, Japanese body and foreign mind. And her parents are typically old-fashioned Japanese. She has learned to expect the courtesy, the deference paid our women, the 'ladies first' of our world. Now she will be forced into the strait-jacket of Japanese women. She will be beautifully dressed and will have motor cars and all that, but she will learn that her freedom is gone, her personality is gone, and that it is 'men first' always in Japan. That is the way it will be with her with the Japanese, and then, if she goes with the foreigners, if she is



allowed to mingle with them — well, you saw what happened to-night. It is fortunate for her that she will not live in Yokohama. In Tokyo it is better. There the foreigners are scattered, and they mingle more sympathetically, generally, with the Japanese; but in Yokohama, where all the foreigners live together in the Settlement, with their little cliques, and coteries, and constant gossip and observing what every one does, there a girl like she is much held at arm's length. It is the women mainly who cause it. They make the men feel that they must not show too much interest, or they suffer their displeasure."

"But a girl like that; why she's a mere child!"

"A mere child." She laughed. "I have so often wondered, when the men always say that about the girls, whether they really are so dense. Is it possible that the mere smallness and quaintness really blind them. Can't they see that they are as much women as we are, with the same thoughts, with passions as intense as those of all other women. Of course, many of the men must know better, must have learned ——" She seemed to seek for words, gave it up, laughed. "You know, I am becoming involved in a delicate subject. After all, you must see for yourself and form your own conclusions."

The Russian was coming towards them. She rose. "It is late, and we must be up early if we are to see Fuji. If you want more information, ask Mr. Lüttich. Men can explain such things better. Good night."

"Lüttich," Kent turned to the Russian. "Miss Elliott was just hinting that the lot of the foreign-educated Japanese girl in Japan is not a very happy one. What do you know about it? It interests me."

Lüttich shrugged his shoulders. "One of the pangs of the transition that Japan is going through. It is the whole keynote to Japan to-day. The nation is

trying to squeeze a feudal chain and mail outfit in under the white shirt front of modernity, and the process causes difficulties. The point is that, with all her modern veneer, railroads, electric lights, factories, street cars and all that, Japan is still feudal entirely in thought. Take your friend, Baron Saiki, for instance; as polished a diplomat as you can find in Washington or London. To-morrow, back in Japan, his mind will be as feudal as was that of his ancestors three hundred years ago. In fact, it has always remained so, but the Japanese have learned to put on a foreign suit of thought, just as they put on a foreign suit of clothes, and, under it all, the old feudal thought remains unchanged, just like their skins.

"In that way you see these well-bred men and women of Japan attending social functions, dressed like us, acting like us, following our codes and manners, and that is about all you see of their lives, the modern, the outward part. But the everyday life, that which goes on behind the walls and *shoji*, which you seldom get even a glimpse of, that has not changed. There the old feudal era is persisting. The wife is subservient to her husband, the daughters must obey and serve their brothers. And after all, it works well; in fact, apparently better than our system. They have practically no marital scandals. The Empire is built on the foundation of the family and it seems to wear well; it would be foolish to tamper with it, to try to replace it with something, our system, for instance, which is hardly a success. And it is my firm belief that generally the Japanese women are happy, every bit as happy as those of America or Europe. That system is what they have always known. It may be the bliss which is born of ignorance, but as long as the ignorance remains they are happy.

"Now that is where the point comes in about girls

like Miss Suzuki. She has become accustomed to our ways, our point of view. She expects to take the usual precedence, to receive the usual courtesies from men, to be waited on by them. And now, in her home, the men will walk in advance and she will follow. If she drops something she will pick it up herself, but if her brothers drop it, she will have to scramble after it, and if a servant is not handy, they will order her about like one. Now, if she had never seen anything else all her life, that would be natural; she would never give it a thought. But she has grown up under our conventions. She cannot help but long for the courtesy, the deference, which she has become used to, which she craves for. But, first of all, she does not go out much, as do our girls, for Japanese women don't attend, generally, social functions where both sexes are present, except garden parties, receptions and other boresome affairs. But even if she does go out, say to teas, hotel dances and such things, and even if she receives there from the modernized young Japanese the outward show of courtesy which is part of modern social usage, she knows that it is all for the moment only. Her brother who picks up her fan at the Imperial Hotel will send her scurrying for his slippers at home. If she marries the young blood who obsequiously leads her to her seat in the ballroom, she will jolly well walk behind him if she marries him.

"That, I think, is the tragedy of the modernized Japanese girl, that she has had a glimpse of ideals which she will probably never attain. Of course, there may be some heart-burning at the attitude of some of the foreign lady cats, who would prevent white men from associating with the Japanese girls. It is natural that they resent the charm which these girls have for many of the young men who should be the exclusive property of the women of their own race; but that

obtains mainly in Yokohama, and very little in Tokyo, where the foreigners are scattered and where the biggest guns in the social world are undeniably Japanese. And outside of some isolated incidents like that to-night, I don't think that point counts much. The fact is that while the Japanese girl who has had some contact with foreigners undoubtedly wishes that our manner of treating our women might be extended to them, you will find that marriages of ladies of the aristocracy with foreigners are extremely rare. The man who thinks he is regarded as a prize simply because he is white is a fool. Among the lower and middle classes it is probably different. To many of these girls the courtesy and consideration shown by foreign men to their women must contrast sharply with the prospect of a life of constant obedience, subservience and drudgery, first to her brothers and then to her husband. They say that once a Japanese girl has had relations with a foreigner, at least a decent foreigner, she almost never wishes to take up with men of her own people. I've seen a lot of cases which make me believe that this is true. But girls of the class of Miss Suzuki are practically never allowed to marry foreigners, and foreigners of their class hardly ever marry Japanese. So they must be unhappy, poor dears. They despise the trammels of Japanese married life, and that which they have learned to wish for they can't attain. The lives of these girls, the pioneers of their sex in attainment of western culture, is one of the many tragedies of Japan in transition."

## CHAPTER II

They arrived too late in the morning to see Fuji-san. Clouds lay over the mountain ranges and smoky haze obscured the land, only the nearest foreshore appearing, gray, formless, without detail. It might have been the California coast, any coast line, in fact. Only the sampans which passed them, standing out to sea, with their characteristic square sails, high galleon-like poops, indicated the Orient. They passed quarantine. A launch came up smartly to the ship's ladder. A tall man in pongee waved his big white sun-helmet up to Kent.

It was Erik Karsten. Kent had expected to see him. They had been friends, when Karsten was dramatic and art critic on the *Herald*, before he had gone to Japan some years ago. They had corresponded and Kent had looked after his son, young Mortimer Karsten, until the boy had graduated from the university and had gone to Europe for further study. Karsten had written him, when he had heard that he was coming to Japan, that he must make his home with him, at least until he decided to make other arrangements. It made it particularly pleasant. They were warm friends.

They climbed up the ladder, police officials, steamship agents, Karsten and the rest. The friends shook hands.

"By Cæsar, but it is good to see you," said Karsten. "I have been feeling a bit lonesome these last few years. I am glad you will stay with me, at least for a while. Here, give your trunk keys to Martin. He

will see your stuff through the customs. It will be too late to get to Tokyo for tiffin, so we will eat at the Grand. Then you can take a turn about Yokohama, and we'll be in Tokyo in time for dinner."

He went through the usual form of police examination. The steamer crept up to the wharf. Yokohama was as he had expected, the foreign settlement drab and tedious as of old; the typically Japanese section had receded a bit farther into the background; there were a few more red-brick official buildings. The return brought no thrill. Even the rickshaw seemed commonplace after he had ridden in it a few minutes. He felt as if he had been away from Japan only a score of weeks rather than a score of years.

Though he had halfway expected this, he was disappointed. Karsten read his thought.

"Yokohama always disappoints, doesn't it? I shall never forget my shock when I first came to the Fabled Orient and found this nondescript changeling of a city. Tokyo is becoming spoiled, too. They are covering it with electric poles, tangles of wires, atrocious buildings, all the dreariness of civilization, which they have a positive genius for making as obtrusive as possible. It seems almost that when they copy our civilization they make a point of making the worst parts thereof the most conspicuous. They can endow them with a hideousness which you don't find in any other place in the world. Still, Tokyo is not as bad as Yokohama. You may still find large quarters which are Japan. I have found such a place. I hope you will like it."

They arrived at Karsten's house late in the afternoon. Hugh felt his hopes rise as they left the prosy, noisy main streets and their rickshaws began a tortuous journey through narrow alleys, through a typically Japanese quarter, with clean wooden houses, latticed paper windows, grilled entrances, bamboo fences, and

daintily contrived roofed gates through which might be glimpsed miniature gardens, with dwarfed pines, stone lanterns, curved paths of broad gray stones.

A steep stone stairway, winding erratically up the hillside against which nestled the quarter below, brought them to Karsten's house. Thank God, here was a place such as he would wish to live in, which was in harmony with his dreams of the spirit of Japan. Japanese in every detail, set in a cool garden overlooking the cluster of houses through which they had passed. In the rear lay a great temple, set in extensive grounds, a cool, calm space shadowed by old trees conveying a feeling of vast, eternal peace.

"You see, I am almost literally between the devil and the deep sea." Karsten swept his hand before him. "These houses below are a geisha quarter, as you might know by the immaculate trimness and careful detail. It is more characteristic at night, when the lights are lit. You'll see. There, behind us, in the temple grounds, you may always find peace, rest. Can it be a sort of telepathic influence? I don't know; but it seems almost as if centuries of calm meditation, projection of their minds into the infinite by generations of priests, the devout prayers of hundreds of thousands of worshipers, from cradle to grave, have permeated the whole space with an atmosphere, an aura of infinite peace. I am absolutely pagan. I have no creed or religious philosophy whatever. Still, sitting alone in this place, letting my thoughts go, I come nearer the idea that there is something, some one, some force, above, beyond, eternal, dominant, controlling the universe. Buddha, God, call it by whatever name you like, but some vast, hidden, mysterious force. Anyway, if I am troubled, agitated, here I may always find peace."

They entered the house. A tall, handsome Japanese

woman met them, bowed deeply, gracefully. "*O hairi nasai*. Please enter."

The soft, deep ring of her voice, its musical modulation; the richness of her silks in spite of their somber shades; the every evidence that here was a woman of refinement, a gentlewoman, startled Kent. Plainly this was no servant. Could it be that Karsten had contracted one of these indefinite Loti'esque temporary arrangements which are fairly common in Japan? Still, then he would have said something about it. He wondered.

But Karsten gave no explanation.

"Jun-san, this is Kent-san. Kent, Jun-san has been looking forward to your coming. She is pleased that you speak Japanese. She speaks no English."

She clapped her hands. A servant came, took their hats. They entered a large, cool room, upstairs, whence they had a full view of the clusters of geisha houses below. Jun-san followed, brought tea. He noticed that she drank also. Evidently not a servant; probably an "*oku-san*," after all? Still, in such case it was odd that Karsten had not mentioned it. Well, time would tell soon enough. He liked her presence there, sitting gracefully, Japanese-fashion, on a silk cushion, ever watchful, attentive to anticipate their wants. Her mere being there lent an air of rich, but delicate, exotic Oriental beauty to the room, as though she were some infinitely wonderful, gorgeous ornament, contrived to harmonize with, to add grace to the surroundings. He liked the soft, slow smile when she answered him in her grave contralto voice; but he noticed that when she was not speaking, when he and Karsten were conversing in English, when she took no part, she was ever watching Karsten, with an expression of sadness, it seemed to him, a hint of wistfulness. It oppressed him a little with its indefinite



mystery. He tried to put the thought away, as he went on talking with Karsten, but he could not free himself from the sense of an oppression of sadness, vaguely permeating the house as might a breath of heavy incense. He felt himself seized, unaccountably, knowing no definite reason, with a feeling of compassion, of sympathy, for Jun-san.

### CHAPTER III

Kent's office was in the rear of a building in the Shimbashi section, a corner room facing two sides on narrow alleys, neither more than four feet wide. His landlord, Nishimura, whose International Agency occupied the front, was holding forth volubly. He would talk inexhaustibly about his life, his affairs and, principally, about his manifold abilities, in English, for he had lived for years in the United States.

As he talked, Kittrick came in. Kent had known him years ago, in the San Francisco Press Club, before he had gone to Japan for the Universal Syndicate. He hoped that his arrival would put an end to Nishimura's talk, but the Japanese only waved a greeting to Kittrick — evidently he knew him. He bubbled on.

"I am very pleased that I can always help you, in anything, everything. If you want anything, ask Nishimura. I can get you access to all the big men, the ministers of state, the politicians, the big business men, everybody. I can get you anything, an interview, a clerk, invitations to the official functions, a street-car pass, a sweetheart," he leered suggestively. "You have a unique advantage of situation, Mr. Kent, between knowledge," he pointed towards the region of the International Agency, "and pleasure," he waved his hand generally in the direction of the walls and paper-covered *shoji* appearing, familiarly close, through the office windows.

"It is a select neighborhood, Mr. Kent. The heart of the most refined geisha quarter, hidden, so discreetly, don't you think, behind our respectability, yours

and mine. There, you see, is the Akebono *machiai*, one of the most famous waiting houses, where you may feast with geisha." He pointed across one of the alleys where the *shojis* had been drawn aside, the wide window opening displaying a large, immaculately clean room, furnished with the constraint usual in Japan, with only a low table and some silk cushions, a *kakemono*, hanging silk scroll picture, in the *tokonoma* recess. "A very quiet place usually in the day," he explained. "But at night, ah, what scenes of revelry, with happy guests disporting themselves with sake wine and the pretty geisha." He sighed and threw wide his arms, as would he, ravished, press to his breast one of the beauties of his imagination. "You shall see, Mr. Kent, even here," now he was pointing through the window in the other wall to a smaller house. The closed, opaque paper *shoji*, bamboo barred, were almost within arm's length. From beyond it came the strident whimper of samisen strings. "That is O-Toshi-san," he explained confidentially, impressively, "the famous O-Toshi-san. You shall see her often, there in her window; but, Mr. Kent, do not lose your heart there. No, don't," he became even more confidential, suggestively smiling. "She belongs to Mr. Kato, the police commissioner. He paid big *makura-kin*, pillow-money, oh, so big, I hear —"

A clerk entered and whispered to Nishimura. "I am so sorry," said the landlord. "My affairs. I must go, but I shall come and see you often. Good morning."

It was a relief. His chatter had filled the room, monopolized the situation. "I have certainly fallen into a queer neighborhood," said Kent. "I shall apparently have a liberal and inexpensive education in geisha matters. What did he mean by pillow-money, anyway?"

"That's so; you left Japan too young to know about such things," said Kittrick. "Well, the institution differs considerably, according to locality, I think, but it means ordinarily a sum paid to a geisha who then becomes, so far as love favors are concerned, the exclusive jewel of the man who pays it. She may, of course, continue to entertain other guests as a singer or dancer and so forth, but that man is, or is supposed to be, her only lover. In fact, you know, you are not as queerly situated as you think you are. The geisha quarters are scattered in various parts of the city; you find them rubbing up against business and office quarters in lots of places. They are not bad neighbors at all. You may come to like these girls. For while some of them are just common women, many are quite exclusive, as, for instance, your neighbor lady appears to be, with just one lover; and not a few are absolutely clean morally, virginal, even though they make their living by singing, and playing, and entertaining men in their idle hours. For the Japanese they are institutional. In many cases important business deals are closed only in the *machiai*, with geisha adding grace to the occasion. Statesmen discuss their affairs in their presence. The Japanese tired business man, when he wants a change from the formality of family life, finds relaxation in a few hours with them, drinking, chatting, listening to their singing, enjoying their bright wit; often, as a rule, I think, that is all, though, of course, it frequently goes further. I myself have come to appreciate very much the Japanese point of view. There is so little to do in Tokyo, no theaters or concerts to speak of; only the cinemas. So occasionally, when time hangs on my hands, I go to some clean little tea house, call a geisha or two, lie about comfortably, lazily, enjoy their chatter — they are such merry, charming children.

You get complete relaxation. It is easy to understand how the Japanese men, whose wives, as gentlewomen, could not and would not think of unbending to the gay fripperies of such talk and play, find their amusement with these girls. Of course, many of the men have sweethearts, mistresses, *mekakes*, concubines, as they commonly are called, but these things are not as greatly different from similar phenomena in America and Europe as you might think, and I am under the impression that the characteristically Japanese concubine system, if there is such a thing, is gradually dying out.

"However, I didn't come here to talk geisha. If you want me to show you the ropes as a newspaperman, I'm going now to the Foreign Office, and you had better come along."

The first glimpse of the Foreign Office attracted Kent — the great wall, with white mortar forming big lozenges, the only glimpse of typical Japan in the vicinity where great red brick buildings, the Navy Department, the courts, and, gray and forbidding, imposing even while its walls were crumbling, the Russian Embassy, formed the nucleus of official Japan. But once inside the iron grilled gate, the Foreign Office buildings were unimpressive, tediously modern. They did not even go to the main structure, but went to the right into a long, drab edifice.

"This will be one of your main points in your work," said Kittrick, as they waited while the solemn old commissioner shuffled upstairs to announce them. "This is the information bureau of the Foreign Office, the main function of which is to see that foreign correspondents are kept satisfied with as little information as possible. We are now about to see the head oracle, Mr. Kubota. He was in London and Washington for years, and Japanese officialdom speaks

highly of his abilities. He has to be quite a diplomat, you know, to answer a great many questions and still give out next to no information, anyway."

The commissionaire appeared and ushered them into Kubota's office, a large, simply furnished room. A middle-aged, pleasant-faced man, immaculate in frock coat, rose to greet them. His English was perfect. He was courteously cordial. One liked him instinctively. They chatted awhile about Kent's plans, how he liked Japan, the usual trivialities. "I hope you will come here often. We shall all be glad to be of every service possible to you, I and my assistants."

He called over a young man who had been sitting in the background. "My chief assistant, Mr. Kikuchi," he introduced. Kikuchi, more interesting at first sight than his chief, was a typical young aristocrat, in rich silk kimono, with long, sensitive fingers, urbanely smiling. Kent learned later on that he was regarded as one of the rising men in the Foreign Office, a man with brains as well as prestige. His father, Viscount Kikuchi, was considered, in the most intimately informed circles, to be the leading mind of the Privy Council.

"We have heard of you already from Baron Saiki," said Kikuchi, shaking Kent's hand firmly. "We shall be glad to become your good friends, if we may. In fact ——" he glanced towards his chief.

The older man smiled. "Yes, Mr. Kittrick, we had, in fact, thought of having one of our little tea parties as a welcome to Mr. Kent and for Mr. Jones, you know, who came a few weeks ago for the *New York Chronicle*. To get them acquainted, just a few of us from the office here and the newspapermen. We have these little informal, friendly gatherings now and then, Mr. Kent. Do you think you should like to come?"

Kent thanked him. They chatted for a while. Kent was introduced to a few more officials, all pleasant, extremely urbane, fluent in English. Then they came away.

"It should be pleasant to come here," commented Kent. "They seem intelligent and friendly. I like them."

"They are pleasant," replied Kittrick. "And clever too, though, queerly enough, it is the common thing for the Japanese to regard the Foreign Office as a pretty stupid institution. Although it has done mighty well, it seems to me, disentangling the foreign policy mess left by Terauchi and his ilk, cleaning up the Yap, Shantung, Chinese and Siberian questions, the Japanese people and press seem to think that they are a pretty poor lot. Of course, they have had a fairly hard time of it with the War Office, the General Staff. Many people think that they are unduly under the thumb of the militarists, but the very fact that the army and navy Ministers are not responsible to the Cabinet makes running the foreign policy harder, as the militarists have had the habit of letting the Foreign Office propose, and then doing the disposing themselves, and that seems to me to make what our diplomatic friends have done the more praiseworthy.

"Yes, you will find the Foreign Office crowd pleasant," he continued. "But as a source of information you'll find them disappointing. Like all the rest of the officials, they are obsessed with the national mania for secrecy. All the officials seem to think that they may get into all kinds of trouble by telling the press something; that they can never get into trouble when they tell nothing. The great cry of the Japanese is constantly that they are misunderstood by the rest of the world, and still when we fellows who honestly want to bring about understanding try

to help them along, they won't help us or themselves. Say, for instance, that some fool report against Japan crops up in Washington, or London, or Paris, and you come here to get the thing straightened out, to get Japan's side; you will, as a rule, find it is like pulling teeth, and often, when you do get the story, they won't let you quote the Foreign Minister, or even the Foreign Office generally. They want you to cable that 'it is reported,' or 'it is said' or 'there are indications that,' taking all the value out of the statement. Then, if you want to see one of the Ministers or some other big gun, they will probably arrange that you see him — they are tremendously obliging, I admit — but it will take a week or more before the interview can be arranged, and in the meantime the harm has been done abroad. Your story, Japan's version, has become old as Genesis, it has gone cold. And then they sit up and wail that the world misunderstands them. All this talk you hear about the infernally clever, insidious Japanese propaganda is plain rot. If there is one thing they don't know a thing about, it is propaganda. They have their propaganda newspapers, it is true, particularly in China, but everybody knows them, and they don't count. This talk about the Foreign Office handing out huge sums to writers and others is funny. The War Office people have the funds, and I daresay they spend them where they think it will do good. The General Staff, that is the secret force in the Japanese Government, and you and I never hear what goes on in there. See its headquarters, that old, gray building with the green copper roof; that's the last remaining stronghold of militarism, in its good old form, on this earth; and General Matsu, the chief, is the proper high priest, the simon-pure militarist, with ethics as primitive as those of a cave man. They are giving in now. They have to, for



Japanese public opinion about spending great sums on armies is the same as it is in the rest of the world, but they are clever. They feel—it is probably their sincere idea of patriotism—that Japan can be great only by militarism, and where they reduce the army by two soldiers, they probably buy one machine gun, making up in strength in one way what they lose in the other. They probably feel that if they can't preserve Japan's strength openly on account of public opinion, they must do it quietly, for Japan's good. But there, under that green roof, lie the forces of old Japan, and there, on the other side of the city, in the students' quarter in Kanda, in the laborers' quarters of Honjo and Fukagawa, the forces of new thought are stirring and fermenting. It is medieval feudalism as opposed to modern industrialism, with a lot of more 'isms thrown in, Socialism, Communism, Sovietism even, new ideas, half understood, misunderstood, but grasped at with passionate eagerness, the young generation and the workers seeking such morsels of new thought, often the worse thought, that they can find, and swallowing them, half digested, or not digested at all.

“There is danger in all this. There is a turbulence of too precipitate transition. It needs wise handling. There is good in it all, this passionate desire for making Japan modern, but all these young, restless forces should be directed, led along wholesome paths, and all that the powers-that-be—the militarists, the capitalists, the police—seem to know is repression. I can see lots of good in both sides, the cautious conservatism of the old generation which clings desperately to the ancient virtues which it sees spurned; and which sees all that is bad, unwholesome, in the new movement; and the young generation which wants to create a new Japan in a day, which wants to walk before it

has learned to crawl, which is prone to discard the virtues and values of old Japan before it has learned to understand and use modern, Western civilization. It is a game for high stakes which is going on here under our eyes, where immeasurably precious values of an old civilization, unique, irreplaceable, are likely to be lost, to be thrown ruthlessly aside; and, on the other hand, there is loss every day that the intentness, the eagerness of the younger generation, of the masses in the cities where they have acquired zest for modernism, is suffered to waste itself in futile groping after lots of unwholesome stuff, which they think must be good fruit mainly because it is forbidden; especially when all this eagerness to learn, this ambitious energy might, with a little sympathy, a bit of understanding wisdom, be made into a tremendous power for constructive good. The longer you live here, Kent, the more you will come to see that what Japan needs to-day, what she must have, is another Meiji, some strong, wise directing force, a truly big man — but there is no such man to-day."

## CHAPTER IV

A row of shoes in the entrance of the tea house told them that most of the others had already arrived. A flock of maidservants met them, took their hats and canes, waiting while Kent and Kittrick took off their shoes. Kikuchi appeared. "We are nearly all of us here," he smiled. "Come in. Make yourself at home, Mr. Kent, Kittrick-san will tell you that we don't stand on ceremony."

In a large room, unfurnished save for a few *kakemono* pictures, they found Kubota and half a dozen Foreign Office men, with six or seven correspondents, talking, smoking. Butterfield of the *Times* and Templeton of the *Express* were old hands, with many years in Japan behind them. Most of the others were far more recent arrivals. Some of them showed by the self-conscious lack of ease of the white man when he first finds himself, socially, in stocking feet, that they were still new in Japan. Kent was introduced. The conversation flowed on, in groups. Tea and cigarettes were served.

A maid slid aside some of the partitions and they looked into a large room with small, individual lacquered tables set in three sides of a square, each with a cushion on the matting. "Please take your seats, gentlemen," Kubota waved them in. "Take your places where you please."

They squatted on the cushions. Kent was pleased to have on one side young Kikuchi. He had taken an instinctive liking to him. On the other side was Jones, a dumpy, solemn-faced man, fidgety, ill at ease.

Beyond him was Kittrick. Farther along, on both sides, sat the rest, Japanese and foreigners mingled. Conversation flowed easily, mostly in English.

Soup was brought in lacquered, covered bowls, and a cloud of geisha appeared, a score or more, brightly clad in shimmering silks, with huge brocade obi scarfs fashioned in elaborate bow-like arrangements. The curious whitening of the faces, with the black, delicately arched eyebrows, almond eyes, crimson lips, fantastically high headdress, tastefully contrived contrasts of color, all served to provide an exotic air, to produce the impression that, after all, this was Japan, a unique country, different from all others. The deadening effect of trite modernism produced by the modern garb of the Japanese hosts, their perfect foreign polish, faded into the background. The geisha scattered among the tables, seating themselves with the guests, smiling to them, attending to their needs. As he looked across the table into the pretty face opposite him, Kent experienced a sense of grateful relief. Thank God, the bloom and charm of old fairy-tale-like Japan had not all faded away yet.

He fumbled with his chopsticks. He had almost forgotten the art of using them. The geisha gently took them from him, smiled engagingly, showed him how to use them. "*So desho.*"

He thanked her in Japanese. Her finely formed hands, small like a child's, came up in surprise. "But you can't use chopsticks; you are new in Japan; and still you speak Japanese. *Bikuri shimashita.* I am surprised."

The spirit of the thing swept over him. He felt as if he had played with geisha all his life. "It is true. I have just come. But I looked into your bright eyes, and see, the words have come to me. It is a gift."

"I think you lie." She eyed him dubiously. Japanese girls are disposed to take literally even the unbelievable. "Kikuchi-san, he lies, doesn't he?"

But Kikuchi smilingly upheld him. "It is true. He has just come. You know, these foreigners are truly wonderful people."

"It is wonderful." She clapped her hands delightedly, called over other girls that they might share in the marvel. They twittered like birds. Kent suddenly found himself the center of attention, enjoyed the exhilaration of flashing *jeu de mots*, though he found that his childhood's vocabulary served only haltingly in the bright thrust and parry repartée with the geisha.

"I didn't know you could speak Japanese. What are they saying?" It was the querulous voice of Jones. Kent felt a quick pang of sympathy for him; he had been forgotten, neglected even by the geisha in the excitement.

"Oh, I lived here as a child, and I remember a little, but I told that girl that I was learning the language from her eyes; such is the gay foolishness with geisha, irresponsibility, laughter, that is the charm." But he could not draw Jones in. "I see," was his only reply, and he turned to the food before him.

More food was brought, course after course, daintily served, strange dishes, often puzzling as to how they must be eaten. The geisha fluttered about, changing from table to table, staying a few minutes with this guest, a bit longer with this other, charmingly gay, beautiful creatures, woman bodies in butterfly raiment, and with the radiant spontaneous happiness of children. And with all their laughing familiarity, intimacy almost, they were constantly watchful, alert to attend the men, with bewildering skill picking the bones from

the trout, which were served whole, leaf-garlanded, on richly ornamented porcelain. Sake was brought in, hot, in small stone bottles. Guests and geisha lifted steaming little cups, laughed, drank, the girls constantly refilling the tiny bowls. The atmosphere titillated with laughter and talk. The men stretched themselves more easily on their cushions. Some rose and went visiting at other tables. The room was electric with gayety, staccato Japanese and guttural English words mingling, accompanied, set off by the rippling laughter of the geisha.

Kubota had begun the journey which is the function of the host. From table to table he proceeded, offering a cup of sake to each guest. The guests drank; each rinsed the cup in the bowl of water on the table before him, the ones who were old in Japan doing it expertly, immersing the bowl and withdrawing it suddenly so that the water was sucked in by the vacuum with a gurgling cluck. Then the guest would hold the bowl out towards the geisha. She filled it, and he handed it to Kubota, who drank ceremoniously, said a few words of polite greeting, and passed on to the next guest. He passed his cup to Kent. "I am glad to greet you here as a new friend," he said. "I hope we may often enjoy ourselves together." They drank.

Kubota passed on to Jones' table, held out his cup, but Jones waved it away. "Thanks, but I disapprove of liquor." A look of blank surprise crept over Kubota's face. The hand with the cup remained outstretched. It took him a moment to adjust himself to the surprising situation. Then he smiled engagingly. But Jones remained solemn, impassive. Kittrick came to the rescue. "Are you not going to drink with me, Mr. Kubota?" The incident passed, but Kent felt his sympathy for Jones turning to disgust. He turned impatiently to the geisha.

But there was a stir among the girls. A number of them were running towards the space where there were no tables. Samisens were brought in. Three of the girls seated themselves, began tuning the instruments. Three others ranged themselves in line and stood waiting. Suddenly ivory plectra smote taut strings. In a loud treble, almost stridently, the voices of the singers rose over the noisy clamor of the music. The dancers postured for a moment, each with a fan, closed, held straight before her. A chord was struck. Instantly the three fans were snapped open, simultaneously, with a graceful, wide sweep of arms, deep, fluttering sleeves following the undulating movements of small, bejeweled hands. The guests leaned back, watching the brilliant picture, the three girls, faces set in conventional expressionless masks, rich, gorgeous silks waving and sweeping in rhythmic movement, synchronizing with the bizarre cadences of the samisens and the voices, a picture of graceful lines, swaying and changing harmoniously, waves of radiant, flaming colors and shimmering, indefinite tints. The real Orient finally, gorgeous, rare, exotic. A wave of pleasure, satisfaction, swept over Kent. Impulsively he turned to Jones.

"Barbaric." The cold, hard tone cut in like a discord. Kent stared at him. Great heavens, what a point of view! He was about to turn impatiently towards the dancers, but Jones cut in quickly. It was as if anger, resentment, disgust, had been accumulating in him, from one phase of the entertainment to another, had been pent up, gathering volume until he must free himself of his thoughts. He seemed to clamor for Kent's attention, to demand it, speaking nervously, jerkily, finger tips drumming on the table top in emphasis.

"I wish I hadn't come. It is a shock to me to see

these men, high officials of the Government, publicly, brazenly disporting themselves with these women, common women, singers, dancers. And, I really can't help saying it, to see white men, Americans, entering into this degradation. Look at it," he swept his hand towards the dancers, swaying in soft, seductive movement before his irritated eyes. A small *hangyoku*, geisha apprentice, sitting close by, saw his outstretched hand. She glanced at him, puzzled, eager to be of service, and hastily handed him a cup of sake. He swept it aside, and she gazed at him, wondering, black child's eyes large with surprise against the white powder of her face, quaint doll features contrasting oddly against the high coiffure.

Jones went on urgently, as if in competition with the whimper and cry of the *samisens*, the strident voices. "It seems to me that we white men should set them an example, that we have a duty to perform, that even as we are newspapermen, we should assist the missionaries, act as missionaries here ——"

Kittrick's attention had been attracted. He cut in. "If you will pardon me, Mr. Jones, I think we have too many missionaries here already. Japan has far less misery and crime than there is in our big cities, New York, Chicago, San Francisco. Why don't they clean up at home first, where they are needed, maybe, before they come out here. You take my word for it, Mr. Jones, Japan can get along quite nicely without them, and so can the rest of us. But what is the use of talking. If you can't enjoy the hospitality you have accepted, at least have the decency not to criticize it. Here, little beauty," he turned to the *hangyoku*. "Fill the cups, please. Have a drink with me, Kent."

An uproarious twang of the *samisens* marked the end of the dance. The guests clapped. The dancers sank to the floor, bowed in deep salutation, ran down



among the guests. The men rose from their places, new groups formed. Kent was glad to escape. He went up to Kubota, expressed his pleasure. He felt as if he must make some atonement for Jones, wondered whether the Japanese had noticed him. He sensed a soft pressure on his arm. It was the geisha who had first waited on him at table. She had plucked from her hair an ornament, a cluster of artificial flowers, curiously and intricately wrought, with little polished metal bits faintly tinkling and glittering among the red and purple petals. She offered it to him. "You are a nice stranger," she smiled up to him. "I want you to have this. It is a *katami*, a souvenir." He glanced to Kubota, a little at a loss. The diplomat laughed. "It is all right. Take it. It is an omen that Japan likes you. I hope that you may like Japan."

It was getting late. The foreigners began to leave. The Japanese remained behind. "They always do," commented Kittrick. "I have an idea that now the real fun begins. But we never see it. Almost always only the surface, here in Japan."

"He came near spoiling the evening, that man Jones," he remarked, as they walked from the tea house. "Of course, he has a right to his point of view, but why drag in the missionary question on such an occasion. It made me angry. In fact, he made me say more about the missionaries than I really meant."

Kent laughed. "It seems an odd thing how it crops up in all sorts of incongruous places, isn't it; in steamer smoking rooms, in hotel bars. Do you people really dislike them so?"

"It is a big jump from geisha to missionaries," said Kittrick. "Still, since you ask, I should say that on the whole I don't. In some ways the missionaries

do a lot of good for the standing of the white man in the Orient, men like Doctor Wheelwright, for instance, men of broad education and culture, who in a way serve as demonstrations to the Japanese that the West, our race, has culture and high ideals, something beyond mere lust for gain and pleasure. You know otherwise the rest of us — most of us, at least — might easily give the Orientals the idea that we are entirely materialists, that we stand a poor comparison with their own scholars and men of culture. But then there is the other class of missionaries, the fellows with little minds, who can't see beyond the narrow vision they gained at their seminaries, who are forever deploring what they call the evil example set by the worldly white man, you and me, finding fault with our conduct, ever criticizing us, and, for business reasons, taking the side of the Japanese if we happen to criticize Japan. I feel as if the good done by the one class is about evened up by the nuisance caused by the other. I am thankful that I have friends among the first class; the others I carefully avoid. As for the good they do among the Japanese, I don't know. They undoubtedly do some good, but, on the other hand, personally I can't help being a bit suspicious of the native Christian. So many of them go in for Christianity on account of material advantages. It is an easy way to learn English, for one thing, and then, undoubtedly, many of them, the class of Japanese who want to be modern, who grasp at any modern movement, be it French art, opera music, Communism, or jazz, take up Christianity with sort of an idea that it is up-to-date, *haikara* they call it. It is only fair to say, though, that all the smoking-room talk you hear about the missionaries living at ease on the fat of the land is largely rot. Most of them have to live modestly enough, on mighty small salaries. I am willing to give

them credit, most of them, of being sincere enough. I am neutral. I am willing to let them alone, if they will leave me alone. There is the missionary question in the Orient in a nutshell. Well, here I take my car. Give my regards to Karsten — and to Jun-san. Good night."

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## CHAPTER V

Kent drifted into his daily routine quickly and easily. His Japanese clerk watched the papers for him, read over the headlines, and translated into queer, but fairly understandable English the articles which Kent called for. He had made friends with several Japanese newspapermen, keen, elderly men, always pleasantly ready to comment on and to amplify the news of the day, popular tendencies and drift of thought, and who often took pains to keep him informed of the spot news. Then he visited the departments, Foreign Office, Home Office, War and Navy departments, a rather tedious and not very remunerative procedure, interviewing second-rank officials, laboriously extracting formal information, always meeting the unfailing courtesy and polite blankness which makes the Japanese the hardest men to interview in the world. The highest officials, Ministers, for instance, might as a rule be interviewed only by submission of written questions. It seemed as if the human element, the touch of man to man, was constantly deliberately shrouded in an impenetrable veil of bureaucratic formalism. Was it instinctive passion for secrecy, suspicion of the foreigner in general, or merely the deadening influence of worship of official form? He could not make up his mind, but he wished it were possible to talk frankly and openly, with return in openness and frankness, and not always under the peculiar feeling of restraint, of necessity of being constantly *en guard*, as if one were fencing with an adversary in the dark. They were always talking about frankness, about their desire for

it, and yet he felt that it was always one-sided, that all the frankness came from the foreigner, but that for him there could be no penetrating through an impalpable wall of instinctive reserve, into the real, innermost thought of the Japanese.

Still, it was after all a pleasant life and, generally, an easy one. He concluded that Japanese reserve was racial, rather than consciously, deliberately individual. And still there were times when they would be surprisingly frank, almost incredibly outspoken. Even about such a subject as the Imperial House they would sometimes, even officials, like young Kikuchi, speak in terms entirely democratic, as would an American, expressing carelessly ideas which he knew were well within the "dangerous thought" category of the police. It amazed Kent, left him a little at a loss as to how to reply, careful as he felt that he must be in such matters. At first he thought that the opinions were merely thrown out as bait, to draw him out, sound his views, but he soon concluded that this was not the case, that the spread of liberalism had extended far beyond the masses and was finding converts among the young aristocracy, even among some of its older men. Some of it was pose, he felt, the constant desire to show the foreigner that Japanese were as advanced in modern thought as was he, but at the same time he became convinced that substantially, generally, these men spoke truthfully, just what they thought.

He was speaking about it one morning at his office, to Kittrick, when the door opened noiselessly, and Terada appeared, drifted in, floated in rather, as if without movement. He had introduced himself a few weeks after Kent's arrival as an official of the police department, whose business it was to keep a watchful eye on foreigners, particularly correspondents. Since then he had come at intervals of a few weeks. The

door would open, and he would enter, soundlessly, almost apologetically. In his gray kimono, gray felt hat, he seemed like a sort of genii out of Arabian Nights; it was almost as if he materialized, a smoky, indefinite figure, mysteriously growing out of the empty space of the room. It was his habit to make some commonplace observation and then sit smoking, for ten minutes often, before he would make his next remark, also quite commonplace, about the weather, the cherry blossoms, anything. Thus he would sit for an hour at a time, a courteous, self-effacing gentleman, saying something entirely inconsequential; then smoking silently, thinking up his next triviality. But out of the dozen or score of remarks would always be one which Kent felt was the one that counted, the question which he evidently hoped would pass unnoticed among all the others. Who was going to be the new correspondent for the *Post*, what did he think of the action of the Cabinet on such and such a matter? There would come some more camouflage remarks, polite leave-taking, and he would vanish, dissolve, fade away, leaving Kent to wonder whether he had really managed to get any information that he had come for.

He made his usual remarks. Everything seemed to stop, while they waited for him to frame the next one. It became a bore. Kittrick's patience gave out.

"Do you really know so much about us foreigners, Terada-san?" he asked banteringly. "What do you really find out about us?"

"Oh, we know. You were at Ringo-san's tea house last Monday night, with Sato-san, but you only stayed till ten," he smiled sourly. "You got a new cook yesterday. Mr. Kent is to dine at Baron Saiki's tomorrow night."

He smoked for a while silently. Then he faded away.

"He's a queer bird," said Kent, as Terada disappeared. "I'm sure I don't see what he gets out of coming to me? His questions are too transparent, with the main one so carefully sandwiched in among all the rot that he so laboriously contrives. What does he do with it all, the back-door gossip that he gathers so painstakingly?"

"Oh, it all goes down in reports, I daresay, good, bad and indifferent," said Kittrick. "It is all stored away somewhere. It is all a part of their marvelously ramified secret service system, which they copied from Germany. It is a good system. On the whole, it is a good idea for the authorities to keep track of every one, foreign and Japanese, and I don't see why any one should object. The bad ones should be watched. The innocent ones shouldn't mind; in fact, they get protection from the others in that way. I know that some foreigners object to the detectives, but the police are usually polite. Old-timers who have detectives following them often make friends with them — you know they don't hide the fact that they are trailing you — and use them to buy railroad tickets, to help with the luggage; they are willing enough to act as kind of free couriers. Of course, there are some damned stupid officials who look on every foreigner as a potential spy, but much of the talk of newcomers about their being followed by detectives is buncombe. They like to think they are being shadowed. It gives them a sense of importance."

"Ishii-san, run out and get me a package of Golden Bats, please." Kent waited until the clerk had left the room. "I wanted to get him out of the way," he explained to Kittrick. "The fact is that I know positively that my desk is being systematically examined. I lock it; still I find things disarranged. I keep nothing of consequence in it, but it annoys me to have some

one constantly going through my private letters, and I don't know who it can be."

"I don't think it is Ishii," said Kittrick. "I have reason to believe that he is a young man inclined to have 'dangerous thoughts.' That is one reason why I picked him out for you; so he wouldn't be a spy. It is far more likely to be your good landlord. I'm pretty certain that he is in Foreign Office pay. I have had several indications. Tokyo is full of them, people who get information for the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the police, the militarists. They are clerks, rickshaw men, business men, high and low, all kinds. You see, they not only copied the system, but they tried to elaborate on it. But all they got, as usual, was the form, but not the intelligence. They go through the motions of a secret service, but the whole thing is ramified in numberless useless ways. They dovetail and overlap and get all kinds of stupid information. I often wonder at what they do with all they get, all the stuff about my being at a tea house and getting a new cook and the like; but I think that it all goes down in reports, that many of them don't care much what they get, as long as they get something they can put in their reports, any old thing to fill the pages. And still, you know, from all the trash they must undoubtedly get something worth their while every now and then. At times you find evidences of really skillful and clever work. And after all, why should you or I care? They are discreet enough. Nothing comes out of what little foibles they may learn about. Probably they don't care. Remember that, as far as personal freedom is concerned, this is truly The Land of the Free, where no one gives a hang if you have a drink or kiss a pretty geisha behind the *shoji*."

"But how are they in business?" asked Kent. "Do they watch the stuff we send out?"



"I wish I knew. I think every correspondent wishes he knew," said Kittrick. "Sometimes I think a copy of every cable we send goes to the Foreign Office. There is no reason why it shouldn't; in fact, I can see no great objection. Still, I never knew them to interfere with our cables. I have sent stuff that I thought would be stopped; but it went through. At the time of the so-called 'serious affair,' when old Prince Yamagata tried to interfere with the engagement of the Crown Prince, and the whole nation was whispering about it, and the censors were working overtime to keep the thing quiet, I cabled the whole thing. Now, if they ever interfere, they would have done it then; but the cable went. I know most of us feel a bit suspicious, and once or twice old Kubota has quoted almost word by word cables which I had sent the day before. It may have been coincidence, but it is funny. It makes you wonder. In fact, you will find that most of the fellows send mail stuff that they want to be sure of, through friends who are going across to the States, but, frankly, I don't actually know how far we are being watched."

"By the way, I heard that you were going to dinner at the Saiki's," he added. "If he is a friend of yours, you will find him a good one."

Kent had hoped that the dinner at the Saiki's would be given in Japanese style, that he might thus have an opportunity to get a glimpse of the more intimate life in an aristocratic Japanese household, but the moment he and Karsten drove into the grounds, it was plain that he would be disappointed in this. The house was a large hybrid affair, with a foreign style section and another part purely native, weird and ungainly combinations which are becoming common in Tokyo and which do their share in degrading the architecture of

the city. The Japanese part lay in semi-darkness, but the other wing was brilliantly lighted. Servants in foreign livery took their things, and they were ushered into a large drawing-room, furnished punctiliously in French fashion, almost too correct. One suspected immediately the hand of the professional decorator behind it all. There was even less to indicate Japan than is usual in foreign homes in Tokyo. The pictures, the bric-a-brac, all was European. A splendid cloisonné vase in a corner was the only bit characteristic of Japan; but then such a thing might be found in any drawing-room in Paris or London. At table it was the same, — a cocktail, then French courses, wines, decorations, served by servants in black and gold livery. The kimonos of some of the women, the high helmet-like coiffures of a few, served only to accentuate the European atmosphere: and then some of the younger women, even though they wore kimonos, dressed their hair in the foreign mode which was becoming fashionable in Tokyo, the hair arranged, in its natural softness, without the usual oily dressing, in soft rolls hiding the ears.

Kent found himself seated between Baroness Saiki and Miss Suzuki. Farther on sat young Kikuchi, then another Miss Suzuki, then Karsten, with Kikuchi's sister at his right. Among the others were Templeton of the *Express* and Butterfield of the *Times*. The rest were all Japanese officials and their wives.

Conversation was carried on in English and Japanese. The men were all fluent in English. The women, even when they spoke it, smiled much, charmingly, but said little, seemed to be a peculiarly happily contrived background rather than a material element of the affair. Kent found himself absurdly ill at ease when Baroness Saiki insisted on speaking Japanese. He knew that only few foreigners attain the perfection

where they may venture with safety to attempt the language of the aristocracy, with its honorifics and a vocabulary containing many words and idioms entirely different from those of the common tongue. He felt as might a Frenchman who had learned his English on the Bowery and who suddenly finds himself under necessity to speak with a *grande dame* of ancient Boston lineage. He tried it, hesitantly, fearing momentarily that he would make a *faux pas*; then he made a clean breast of his trouble to her. She was amused, encouraged him to go on; but even then it was irritatingly difficult to devise subjects which might interest her. Books, the opera, mutual friends, all the usual topics were useless. It was almost like trying to interest a woman who had come forth, suddenly, from the seclusion of a seraglio. Fortunately she had been abroad. He grasped at the usual banalities: how did she find Japan after Washington and Paris. She answered quietly, always smiling, charming, gracious; but she would reply in only a sentence or two. Then he must find something new. She had always, when he knew her on the steamer, been very quiet, discreetly non-assertive, but even with that it seemed as if she had changed, become even more retiring, self-effacing since she had come to Japan. He had to think hard to devise pabulum for conversation and began to get a little desperate. It was a relief when Kubota addressed her and she turned to him.

It gave Kent an opportunity to speak to Miss Suzuki. He had been relieved to see that she still wore foreign dress. Evidently her family had not Japanized her to the extent of insisting on her wearing kimono, as did her sister, an extremely pretty girl, in gorgeous silks, with, however, her hair dressed in the modern mode. Kent was extremely pleased to meet Miss Suzuki again; he had thought of her often and had

wondered how he might manage to see her, but it had seemed oddly impossible; there had seemed to be no way of contriving to meet her. But she did not seem as spontaneously gay as she had been on the *Tenyo*. Momentarily a hint of her American animation would appear like a glint of heat lightning, a vivacious bit of high spirits, but it flashed out, subdued into a vague, intangible quietness, smiling gentleness, suggesting a sense of restraint, an almost imperceptibly subtle change in manner and mind.

Baron Saiki addressed him from across the table, a matter of current politics. Templeton and Kubota came into the discussion. Gradually the conversation became general among the men, the presence of the women being sensed, rather than forming an equal part, as a lovely and delicately enchanting obligato beside the dominating pervasion of the men.

Later, in the drawing-room, he found chance to meet the Suzuki girls again. They formed a striking contrast, Kimiko, the younger, resplendent in brilliant silks, gracefully drooping, wide kimono sleeves, stiff brocade obi, recalling a picture of imagination, a fanciful Oriental fairyland vision, picturesque, fantastic almost, against the modestly cut pink evening gown of the sister. Here, removed from the immediate presence of the others, she proved a lively, capricious little damsel. She extended her hand frankly when the elder girl introduced her to Kent.

"Don't you think that I am not modern, just because I speak no English and have always lived in Japan," she flashed at him. "*Nous sommes moderne, nous autres Japonnaises, n'est-ce-pas, Kikuchi-san?*" It suited her. French harmonized better with her air of being a resplendent illusion of whimsical imagination.

Kikuchi came over. "Of course, we are modern, *le dernier cri*. We must show Kent. Now, how would

it be if we all went to Tsurumi, to Kagetsuen. We will show him how Japan and jazz mix. I am sure my sister can fix it so you girls can go. Would you like it, Kent? I'm sure you would. All right, I'll let you know the day later."

The girls were radiant. "You must not think, Mr. Kent, that because we wear the kimono, we can't dance," bubbled Kimiko, protestingly. "I have been dancing for two years now, even at some of the public places, like Kagetsuen. But they are beginning to make a fuss about it, the newspapers and the old fogeys. I hope they don't stop it. My sister has never even been to Tsurumi. We'll have—what is it you say in English, Tsuyuko, oh, yes, a hellu off a time."

"Oh, be careful," the sister glanced about hastily. "Kimiko is so crazy to be modern that she wants to learn English phrases, and she likes the swear words best, I'm sorry I taught her. She won't be careful. She is irresponsible. Please pardon her. I wonder what Baroness Saiki would say."

Karsten came over, but even his rather grave manner could not daunt Kimiko-san. It seemed as if she wished to startle the sister, to impress her with the fact that she, at least, was not old-fashioned. "You look so grave, Mr. Karsten, so dignified, just like our old-fashioned Japanese men. You should be a Japanese, and have a Japanese wife, old-fashioned, of course. Would you like to have one?" She was laughing up at him, like a pretty, mischievous child enjoying its naughtiness.

Karsten laughed. "But I am so stupid about women. Now, if I do, will you find me one, a pretty one? Will you be my *nakodo*, my go-between?"

"Certainly. Of course, an old-fashioned man like you must have a marriage by arrangement, through

a *nakodo*; but Tsuyuko and I, when we marry, we are modern, we shall marry for love, *l'amour, n'est-ce-pas?* We shall ——”

“Ssst.” Kikuchi made a quick warning gesture. Baroness Saiki came over to them. There was no perceptible hush, but the bright sparkle of the manner of the girls changed. They were still smiling, conversing, but it was the gentle, quaint loveliness of the Orient. The moment of glitter had gone. It was nothing as definite as palpable restraint which had come over them; still there seemed to be an indefinite barrier.

The groups broke up, changed, reformed. Every one left early. Kent saw the girls again only when they took leave. He thought he sensed a barely perceptible, still almost definite pressure of Kimiko's hand, as she said good-by, the slightest hint of a glint in the dark brilliancy of her eyes. But he could not be sure; he wondered.

The Saiki mansion was close to the Karsten house, and they walked home in the moonlight, through the streets of the geisha quarter with the opaquely lighted *shoji* contrasting, brilliantly white, against the dark walls, tinkle of samisen and ripples of women's laughter coming out to them in the night.

“Well, back in Japan again,” said Kent. “For what we saw to-night wasn't really Japan, was it? Still, it wasn't America or Europe either. What do you think?”

“It is hard to say,” said Karsten. “Even if what we saw to-night is not Japan now, it is certain to become more and more so, while this ——” he pointed to a *machiai* just ahead. The *shoji* had been drawn aside, and they could see a geisha, resplendent in gold and crimson, languidly posturing, fan slowly sweeping before her in obedience to the rhythm of an un-

seen samisen in the background. "This is not the real Japan, either. The other was Japan to-morrow. This is Japan yesterday. It is difficult to say what is Japan to-day."

## CHAPTER VI

Even as they made their way up the hill, among the booths, animal cages, swinging bridges and slides of the amusement park which formed an adjunct of the Kagetsuen, the crash and cry of the jazz orchestra came down to them. Dancing began early and a number of couples filled the floor of the large hall. The musicians, some fifteen of them, were all Japanese, but they had mastered their peculiar art, the latest phase of the modernity invading Japan. Emphasis seemed to have been laid on modernity. With the exception of a few Japanese lanterns, some characteristic masks, the arrangements were entirely in foreign style. Wicker tables and chairs lined two sides of the hall, where tea was served, English fashion. For a moment this modern air struck Kent as disappointing. Then he looked about at the people, the dancers, those sitting at the tables, and the feeling vanished. A glitter of color shimmered and moved inside this tedious frame, brilliant kimono, gorgeous obi, rich silk, blazing reds, radiant blues, color in all shades and tints scintillating in motion. The colorless space, the commonplace garb of the men, seemed rather to heighten the effect of the exotic radiance of the women.

Kipling's "For East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" came to his mind. It might be true, but the scene before him seemed to belie it. Was there ever such a melting-pot, raiment of a civilization thousands of years old, substantially unchanged, absorbed in the arms of extreme mod-



ernism, the unimaginative West and the evanescent romance of the Orient moving and mingling in the rhythm of jazz. It was bizarre, discordant, but it made a picture odd, almost incongruously anachronistic, but interesting, strikingly illustrative of New Japan.

They found a table and sat down to tea, Kikuchi, his sister, the Suzuki sisters and Kent. They made up programs, but Kent reserved only a few dances. He wished to have opportunity to watch, to study this heterogeneous potpourri of humanity.

Japanese predominated, the men all in European clothing, most of the women in kimonos, though many wore foreign dress, generally simple, but well tailored, becomingly worn. There were many Europeans and Americans, nearly all men. It was difficult to determine their status; they were so much alike, most of them in pongee. Of the women many were apparently business girls, stenographers from Yokohama probably, though here and there might be seen one a bit indeterminable, who caused the mind to hesitate for a moment, in question.

Then there were the Eurasians, slim young men, inclined to be a shade dandified, smooth, graceful dancers; the girls slim also, but with a svelte luxuriance of body, a starry-eyed, almost tropical hint of potentialities of fiery passion slumbering lightly behind their sinuous grace. But, after all, his eyes would revert constantly to the kimonos. They made the high light and luster of the scene, stirring the imagination to wonder who were they, what were they, what were the thoughts, the ambitions, the desires and passions, in these faintly contoured breasts held tightly under silken folds above the stiff brocade sashes? Difficult as it was to determine the character of the others, Europeans and Eurasians, he felt him-

self utterly baffled by the Japanese women. Any one of them might be a daughter of the aristocracy, or she might be a geisha, for all he could know. All the usual minute signs, the hints conveyed by dress, speech and gesture familiar in white women, the indescribable, subtle nuances, which made it possible at home to distinguish between the gentlewoman and the demi-monde, were unknown to him here. It added to the fascination, the bewildering sense of not being able to know, to determine, even to guess with reasonable certainty, as if one were hesitatingly, cautiously venturing into a marvelously fascinating, strange, unexplored country.

A hundred questions clamored for explanations. Who was this one; what could that one be? But his companions gave him little information. They did not know these people, they said. Their tone conveyed to him that he must restrain his curiosity. It was plain that they insisted on being exclusive. They showed acquaintance with only one or two other groups, a party, much like their own, in which young Watanabe, son of the shipping magnate, was the leader; another composed of the sons and daughters of wealthy silk merchants from Yokohama. These, quite evidently, formed a set aside, remote from the gay throng about them.

He had indicated a girl who had passed them in the dance, rather full-figured, Eurasian apparently, with large, languid eyes, who moved with a slow swaying grace before them. It was the sense of dream-like voluptuousness that had attracted him.

"Eurasian. I hear she is a moving-picture actress," answered Kikuchi. "It is democratic, you see. There are all kinds here, girls of gentle birth and geishas, stenographers and actresses. It is queer to have that kind of thing here in Japan, don't you think? Our

girls couldn't come into such mixed company abroad, you know. But we must dance, and there are only these places, this and a few smaller ones in Tokyo; and the management is strict; in fact, I believe they pretend to keep out the geisha element, though I'm sure they wink at their coming so long as they behave themselves. It is really entirely respectable, and our girls are quite all right here so long as we keep to ourselves."

Kent took the hint. He would have liked to have mingled at close range with the others, to venture into the tangle of dazzling, mysterious femininity where your partner of chance might turn out to be a demoiselle of ancient samurai lineage or a motion-picture queen, a stenographer or a geisha. Still, he enjoyed his growing intimacy with the girls in his own party. The fact that they were confined mainly to their own circle brought them together, made it necessary to dance more often with his companions than would otherwise have been the case. He found special pleasure in Kimiko-san. It was his first experience in dancing with a girl in kimono. He enjoyed the strange sense of grasping about the thick, stiff obi; it was something new. He was surprised at her agile vivacity. The orchestra was playing an amazing adaptation of "Zigeunerweisen," stolen almost bodily by the enterprising pseudo-composer, retaining the gipsy fire and sparkle of the original, and she seemed to radiate the electric tingle, the flushing abandon thereof, confusing with the sense of odd contrast of hot, pulsing passion contained within the feudal conventionality of her gorgeous costume.

They sat out the next dance. They were alone at their table. "Do you like to dance with me? Can I dance?" Her eyes flashed at him.

"It is marvelous. It seems so impossible that you

can be so wonderful. And in *zori*; how do you do it?"

She laughed, delighted, looked about. Then she slipped from her small foot, clad in *tabi*, the mitten-like white silk covering which takes the place of a stocking, a *zori*, sandal-like flat footgear, held in place by cross bands. She passed it to him in the shadow of the table. "See, it is slit. We have them made especially for dancing."

It seemed almost impossible that this might be such a prosaic thing as a shoe, this dainty, small object in his hand, surfaced with figured crimson and gold brocade, like a precious work of art, with its red silk cross bands.

"It simply adds to the illusion," he told her. "Out of the mysterious Orient has come to me a gorgeous Cinderella slipper."

"Who is Cinderella?"

He explained, tritely and mechanically at first, restrained by the oddness of bringing forth such a puerility. But she was interested, leaned towards him intently. He warmed to the telling. How was it possible that she might be so interested in such a simple thing? A moment ago she had been a woman, palpitating, warm, in his arms. Now she was a child, listening with eager wonder to a fairy tale. What was she; what were they, anyway, these girls, — children or women, or both? He enjoyed her intentness; tried to apply in the telling all the skill and artistry that he could contrive.

"Oh, what a lovely story! I didn't know you could tell stories. You must tell me many more. I love it." She was radiantly delighted. It pleased him immeasurably. It would be a novel thing, a new experience in life, to recall to memory the half-forgotten childhood tales and to dress them up for her, in terms suitable to fanciful Oriental setting, enjoying the

tremulous reactions which he might thus cause in this beautiful creature with the clear, innocent mind of a child, clothed in the budding curves of the body of a woman.

They were silent for a moment, then she placed her hand on his arm. "But you still have my *zori*."

He had forgotten it. It lay in his hand, absurdly small and elegant. "If it were not really necessary for you to have it, I should like to keep it, as a souvenir, a reward for my story."

"But I can't give it to you now, you know," she was smiling, with just a shade of seriousness. "But you shall have your reward, if you really want such a trifling thing as this, for I wish to have many more stories from you. You must see me often and tell me many just like Cinderella."

After that telling stories to Kimiko-san became a regular part of their evenings at Tsurumi. They came often, and he fell into the habit of thinking up his tales in advance, finding his themes among the rich treasures of the West, from mythology and history, folk tale and medieval romance, even from the Old Testament. It amused him to take the essential dramatic values, coloring the action so as to render it understandable to the Japanese mind, dressing the material in Oriental form. Samson became a valiant samurai and Delilah a perfidious geisha. Hercules performed his prodigies in the atmosphere of the legendary *Momotaro*. He became interested as the thought began to take definite form that here was an idea that he might some day work out into more concrete shape, and in the meantime he enjoyed the breathless interest, the childish intent response which he always awakened in the girl.

It brought them closer together. Their intimacy became recognized gradually by tacit understanding in

their little group. He became her acknowledged cavalier. He wondered at times why this girl had become so much more attractive to him than the elder sister. He was still fond of Tsuyuko-san, but the feeling remained the same, neither increasing nor decreasing, while he sensed that Kimiko-san and he were coming constantly nearer to each other, more intimately parts of each other's thoughts. Could it be that what attracted was in its intrinsic essence the glamor of the East, the charm of the seductive, unknown Orient? The question would come to his mind — were they drifting towards a more definite relation; might not the love element already be germinating, unconsciously developing? He recalled the words of Miss Elliott that these girls were not children, that they were moved and driven by the same passions as those which dominate the more sophisticated women of the West. But he put the thought from him. His moral code was a simple and rigid one. He was married, and he must keep the faith. Even though marriage had been a failure, as long as the bond existed he would play the game. He, at least, would keep his record clean, and while the relation remained there would be no dalliance for him with other women. So in the case of Kimiko-san, as with other women, there could be no question of love relations. There were times when a lingering of her hand, a sidelong glance from dark almond eyes would cause a nervous titillation of agreeable unrest, would quicken his blood, give a flashing hint of something pleasantly, subtly dangerous, but sweet; but it was so evanescent, so intangible. The next moment she would be the gay, virginal child.

He felt that it was rather stupid, an absurd exaggeration of caution; still he had made opportunity to tell her of his wife, in California; but she had not

been interested. "Oh, she is far away," had been her only comment, carelessly laughing, with no accentuation of meaning; and she had turned instantly to light chatter of the moment. Quite apparently it meant nothing to her. So the play kept on. He allowed himself to take pleasure from her radiant presence, her beauty, to rest his eye on her flower-like features, dark eyes, to enjoy the slenderness of her fingers, sense the palpitating magnetism of her lithe body and inhale the perfume of her hair, as he held her, swaying, in the rhythm of the dance. He felt pleasure in the thought that he might enjoy all this rich beauty, as one might that of a flower, a butterfly, unvitiated by sordid taint of sex interest.

But his delight in the charm of Kimiko-san did not dull his interest in the others, the great throng of women, shimmering about him in their glimmering silks, unknown, mysterious to him. They piqued his curiosity. He wanted to know who they were, what they were, what were their lives, their thoughts, to come to know them as intimately as did these care-free youths who held them in the dance, chattered gayly with them at the tables. He felt as if he were being withheld from the familiarity of the charmed circle, resented a little the restraint which he was under when he was with Kimiko-san and her sister. Finally he decided that he would come alone. Lüttich seemed to be there always. Through him he would contrive himself to become a part of this marvelously fascinating butterfly whirl of strangely unknown femininity.

So he came alone, one afternoon, and sought out Lüttich.

"I shall be glad to show you about," said the Russian, "but the fact is that I have little time. I am busy. You see, I am here professionally. For the

moment, at least, dancing has taken the upper hand over music with young Japan, so I have become a dancing teacher. I have more than I can do. I dance from morning till night, giving lessons. It is not bad. They learn more easily than you would think. Then, when they become a bit proficient, I take them out here; but I must dance with them myself, at first, to give them confidence. A lot of these girls, and men, too, for that matter, are my pupils. So you see I am busy as a matter of duty. *N'importe*. It pays, and one must live.

"However, let us sit down for a moment. Have a drink." He called a boy. "You want to know who they are. Well, they are a mixed crowd. All kinds; that's part of the charm, is it not? See that pretty young woman over there, just passing the pillar. She is the wife of the Buddhist priest of the big temple on the other side of the hill. The young fellow with her is an American boy in some company in Yokohama. Priestess and office clerk. Odd, isn't it? Bizarre. Still, I daresay mighty few of them realize it, or give it a thought. See that cadaverous Eurasian with his Japanese wife? They are pupils of mine. They dance well, don't they? Well, two years ago they had never danced a step. Now that is all they do; it is their whole life interest, a new step, the latest fox-trot. You can still see when she walks that she has not gotten over the duck-walk that they get from Japanese *geta*; but you don't see it when she dances. These two have reduced life to terms of fox-trot. That has become their sole standard of measurement; they regard people as good or bad, according to how well they dance."

It was interesting. "Tell me about more of them," said Kent. "I have an absolutely insatiable curiosity."

"I'll do what I can, when I get the chance, but,



as I told you —— ” He caught by the arm a young chap who was passing. “ Here, Dick, I want you to look after my friend, Kent. He wants to know some of the girls. Show him about.” He turned to Kent. “ Dick here can do the honors better than I can. He knows nearly all of them. Duty calls, I am off. Be good.”

Dick grinned pleasantly. Kent had noticed him often, a slim, vivacious man of about thirty, always laughing behind his small mustache, radiating effervescent vitality, infectiously bubbling over with joy of life.

“ First of all you must know Madame Hirano,” he said. “ She’s the boss. It pays to be on the good side of her. She rules with a hand of iron in a velvet glove, not so much velvet, either, if she should catch you here with a girl too much on the off side. Then she’d give you the quick bounce. She’s done it often enough. But she’s a good fellow really. Come along over and I’ll introduce you.”

They went over to a corner where the tyrant had a place of vantage, whence she might survey the entire hall. She was an elderly woman, handsomely dressed. As she sat there, surrounded by a small court of girls from the neighborhood, attached in an indefinite way to the establishment, with her sharp, black eyes constantly roving among the dancers, it was easy to see that here was one of these rather exceptional Japanese women with will power and executive ability; that she was, as Dick had said, the “ boss.”

She acknowledged the introduction graciously, with the slightest hint of condescension, consciousness of her power. It was evidently in Kent’s favor that he was a newspaperman. She told him, annoyedly, of the inimical attitude towards foreign dancing of the Japanese press. They were so stupid, she complained,

aged, half-fashioned. He began to ask her questions about kimono dancers. She looked at him sharply, as if a bit suspicious. He explained his motive—curiosity—how all these types which were familiar to her were strange to him. He wanted to become acquainted with the new woman of Japan. For instance, he should like to meet some of the motion-picture actresses, a type which seemed so characteristic of the most modern tendencies of the country.

Yes, some of them came here, she acknowledged, but she let it go at that, and gave him no information. He tried to press the subject. A slight, vivacious girl, in a splendid kimono in the black and white checkerboard-like pattern which was fashionable that year, fox-trotted nimbly past them. He had often noticed the passionate pleasure which she took in the dance, the cat-like grace with which she swung her body in intoxicated undulations, clinging to her partner, smiling up to him, teeth flashing in an alluring smile—a Japanese Theda Bara, it seemed to him. There now, he ventured, was undoubtedly a lady of the screen.

“But no,” she was shocked, with quick intake of breath. “What a mistake. That is a *go-fujin*, a lady of good, oh, extremely fine family. Certainly not.”

Kent saw he had made a *faux pas*. He was glad when the cadaverous dance-mad Eurasian led her off into the dance.

Dick was laughing. “You certainly got off on the wrong foot, Kent. I’d better do the honors. I know most of them. I ought to. I have lived here all my life. So, fire away.”

It was fascinatingly interesting. He was a complete “Who’s Who,” able to sketch in a few sentences the entire curriculum *vitæ* of most of the dancers, *go-*

*fujin*, actresses, stenographers, married women, rich men's daughters, geisha, girl students, who they were, whence they came, approachable or otherwise. Before them, past them, moved the dancing couples, unconscious of the fact that their lives were being laid bare, their characters stripped, good-naturedly, laughingly, but with a sure, quick touch.

"That girl in pink foreign dress, with pink slippers, that's one of the Thompson girls, Eurasians; father is in silk. They live in Honmoku. There are three of them, but one's married. That one, in red, the one with the pink beads, that's a stenographer with the Standard Oil in Yokohama. Now, that one, with the big, gold obi, I am not quite sure, but I think she is geisha. They say she's from Shimabashi. It is odd, you know, most of the fuss in the Japanese papers has been stirred up by the geisha guilds. They are afraid that if the men get used to foreign dancing, it will raise the devil with the geisha business, that they will come to these dances instead of spending fifty or a hundred yen an evening on geisha. And still the geisha themselves can't keep away from the dance places. The lure has got them, too."

He went on. One after one these elusive, dazzling women, who had so baffled Kent's ventures at guessing, were singled out for brief, concise description, as if they were picked out individually, suddenly, by a searchlight, moving hither and yon in the throng, illuminating each one in intense glare for a moment, then allowing her to slip back into the background of the crowd, as the beam shifted to, rested on, stripped the mystery from another kimono-clad enigma; then moved on to still another.

"Now, there are the Kincaids," he went on. Kent had been curious to know who they were, a middle-

aged, quiet American, and a young woman, whose kimono, with its marvelously delicate texture, glorious though subdued luxuriance, was noticeable even in that dazzling kaleidoscope of rich Oriental stuffs. He had taken the man to be some wealthy foreigner, "import and export" man probably, who took pleasure in showering his wealth on this slight, fairy-like beauty, to indulge his fancy by arraying her in constantly changing ornate frames for her enchanting loveliness.

"Kincaid is a teacher in one of the most exclusive girls' schools in Tokyo," Dick was going on. "She was a pupil there, comes from an old samurai family, blood blue as indigo, but family estates, riches, glory, the whole business gone, all but pride, tenacious grasp on the old traditions. She's a beauty, isn't she? Exquisite. Kincaid was smitten. How he ever managed to see her alone is a mystery. It was romance. Imagine yourself, in this day of wireless and gasoline, conducting a courtship after the fashion of feudalism, the infinitely obscure and meaningless *minutiae* of the days of the Shogunate. It can't have been anything else. The family must have insisted on it. Kincaid is a deep Oriental scholar. He could do it if any one could. He may even have enjoyed it, taken it as a sort of top examination, a supreme test, if he thought of it in that light. I don't know. Nobody knows just what he went through. But he had the devil's own time. Luckily, he had influential Japanese friends, blue-blooded, too, but modern, and they helped him out. And then the girl was infatuated with him, crazy after him. You know they get all kinds of new ideas, these girls, Socialism, free love, careers of their own, art, literature, foreign husbands, it may be one fad or another, anything. Hers evidently was a foreign husband, or, at least, Kincaid.

So at last the family gave in; but that was only half the game. Then came the wedding. It had to be Japanese style, most formal ritual, *san san kudo*, three times three cups of sake drunk by bride and groom and all that. That didn't bother Kincaid. Probably he liked it. But the expense! You know these high-class Japanese weddings sometimes run up to hundreds of thousands of yen. There are all kinds of expensive gowns for the bride, kimonos, obi, ornaments, God knows what. Then the banquet, hordes of guests, at fifteen, twenty, thirty yen a plate, something like that. And then, finally, the presents. You know in Japan the wedded folk must give return presents, usually about twice the value of those they get. You get married. I give you something utterly useless, a vase, a *kakemono*, and then you must come back with something quite as useless but worth twice the price. They say it cost Kincaid thirty thousand yen, which wasn't so bad under the circumstances. He spent every yen he had. That was over two years ago, and they are still saving, paying off their wedding debts, living in a couple of rooms. She does most of the housework, but they are both happy. You can see it. He gets his pleasure taking her here and there, his prize, in her wonderful kimonos, the trousseau, intensely proud of her; and she adores him. Look at her. Her eyes are always on him. She has realized her dream; he has his. No room for regret, no thought of it. Romance, the new, modern West and the age-old East, they have become one. So it works sometimes."

The orchestra blared into a new dance. Dick went off for a partner somewhere in the other end of the hall. Kent leaned back, summarizing, trying to classify his new knowledge. In a way the glib explanations, the reduction into terms of commonplace

of these people, these women, dimmed the picture a little, detracted from its attraction of being unknown; still, he had had but a glimpse behind the veil. What he had learned would but serve to initiate him further, to penetrate more deeply, to insinuate himself more intimately into this attractive, strange world of utterly foreign thoughts, fashions, modes of life.

Behind him, in the garden outside, staring through the open windows, a fringe of Japanese, the ordinary folk who found their pleasures in the slides, and swings and other marvels of the park, were discovering rare entertainment in watching the dancers, the strange new foreign custom of women, gentlewomen at that, dancing together with, in the arms of, men. Abstractedly he listened to their churlish comment.

"They have the luck, these chaps," a burly fellow of the rickshaw man type nudged his friend. "For two yen they can put their arms about these girls, pretty girls, ladies. It's cheaper and better fun than playing with geisha."

The voice of a woman cut in; her hair, dressed high, with a great, heavily oiled knot, proclaimed that she was married. "I don't like it. It's dirty."

A girl sitting next to Kent laughed. She had noticed that he had caught the remark. "Funny, isn't it?" she remarked to him. He aroused himself from his thoughts. He had not noticed her. It was the priestess. She chatted on. He had not been introduced, but, would she dance? Why, certainly; he was a friend of Dick's. So he found himself in the midst of the whirl, enjoying the thought that he, himself, had now become part of this bewildering inconsistency, fox-trotting with a Buddhist priestess, absurd, amusing, but delectable. She danced with full-bodied enjoyment, chatting vivaciously, with a nimble, flash-like wit. When they had returned to their seats, he led

her to tell him about the others. She knew them well, as did Dick, but he enjoyed her characterizations, the Japanese point of view.

The full-figured Eurasian girl, whose dreamy voluptuousness had attracted his attention the first night, when he had been with the Suzuki girls, passed in the dance, nodded over her partner's shoulder to the priestess.

"Do you know that girl? I hear she is a motion-picture actress?"

"*Naruhodo*," she was noncommittal. "Yes, I see her often here. I have spoken to her."

"Then introduce me, please. I know so few people here."

She hesitated for a moment, overcame her doubts. "All right, come."

The dance had finished. The girl was sitting at one of the large tables, with two or three other girls and some young foreigners. He hesitated in his turn. It was a bit awkward. Still, the die had been cast. He must see it through. The priestess laid her hand on his sleeve. "This is Mr. Kent. He wants to meet you."

The girl nodded to him slightly, looking at him, her big eyes wide in surprise. The others at the table stared. Utter silence. He wished he were a hundred miles away. But he was in for it. "Please, Miss ——" Hang it, the priestess had not even given her name. He slid over it. "I am quite strange here. I wonder if you would be kind enough to give me a dance?"

"I am sorry. My dances are all taken." The others still stared. He bowed. The priestess was already in retreat. He trailed after her, to the corner of the lady tyrant. Damn it. He bit his lip in resentment. Who was she, this Eurasian, to hold her-

self too high, too precious," as if he were not good enough for her? Still, of course, the girl was right. What a fool he was immediately to think of race, when he had always insisted, did, in fact, maintain that he had no race prejudice. Good for her, whoever she might be. But he had been an ass. He had made a bad beginning.

Dick appeared. Kent told him. He laughed. "By Jove, but that's funny. You do need a guardian. The moment I leave you, you start adventuring on your own. That's a very respectable girl, a stenographer in Tokyo, nice parents, you know. She's no motion-picture lady. You can't do like that. If you are so anxious to meet the motion-picture folk, why didn't you tell me. The fact is that there are a couple right here. I had sort of a halfway date with them. Come on. We'll take them to dinner down in one of the tea houses below in the park. You eat Japanese chow, don't you?"

The two girls were at a table at the farther end of the hall. He had noticed them often. One of them, the elder, he had guessed to be professional of some sort, theatrical, because of her kimono, a bit too bright, and especially her unusual coiffure, after some eccentric foreign fashion, in a mode which he had never seen, a sort of high, long cone, reminiscent of an Assyrian helmet, which showed to advantage her luxuriant hair, black with a faint tinge of chestnut, effective, but odd. The other was one of the girls who had eluded classification. She had puzzled him, with her large, voluptuous mouth, slow smile showing teeth which might really be described as pearly, but with her quiet manner, almost diffident, giving the lie to those sensuous lips.

"O-Tsuru-san. Kin-chan." There was no trouble over these introductions. The girls laughed, made



— she had become his wondrously efficient guide into the innermost mazes of the great rambling metropolis — she threw an arm about his neck, as they were sitting at a window, looking out over the roofs and told him about herself.

It was a girl friend who had persuaded her to come to Yokohama, and she had taken her to a house, a bad house, where foreigners came. She had been frightened, she had cried. She had wanted to return home; but she was afraid of the parents. And it had been a nice class of foreigners who had come there. They had treated her courteously, been kind to her, kinder than the Japanese men had been at home. So — *shikatanai*, it couldn't be helped. But she had hated it. She had stayed only a few months. She had learned to be independent. And then luck had come her way. One of the foreigners, who was in Japan selling American films, had obtained employment for her with a Japanese company which made pictures. Oh, that wasn't the end; she smiled bitterly. The Japanese men were just like the rest, one must let them have their way if one would succeed. "But now I have succeeded, and I can be independent of them. And I am. There are only half a dozen real Japanese stars, and I am one of them. Pictures of me go abroad. I get two hundred yen a month."

It surprised him, the wage, so infinitesimally small as compared with the fortunes harvested by the Pickfords, the Chaplins, in the United States. Why?

"Oh, it is these Japanese men. They never want to give us women a chance. They won't advertise our names. They won't feature us, as they do in America. They are afraid that then we should get popular and ask for more money." But she was impatient at the interruption. This phase of the matter was not what she wanted to dwell on. "I don't like

Japanese men. They don't treat us nicely, courteously, as do you foreigners. If they do, it is only in the beginning. In the end, very soon, they are all the same. I like foreigners. I am not a bad girl any more. I never wanted to be. But, sometimes I feel that I should like a sweetheart, a foreign sweetheart, who would love me, as foreigners do, and be good to me——" The clasp of the arm about his neck tightened. The fragrance from her hair, the subtle, evanescent perfume which he delighted in, which had become to him characteristic of her, became overpoweringly sweet. She would be his. She was his now, if he cared to take her. They were tempting, these Japanese girls, with their quaint, childlike ways, unsophisticated, even though this one had passed through the mud. The charm of the Japanese women! Kimiko-san flashed into his mind. It was difficult to hold out against their seductiveness. Still, he had made up his mind to play the game with his wife. And yet? He felt that he was hovering. How deliciously soft she was as she clung to him, closer.

The sliding door behind them clattered. A maid came in. The tenseness dissipated. It was like a shock in its suddenness. Trite common sense came back to him, over him, like a shower of cold water, irritating, but dominatingly. By Cæsar, it had been a close call.

## CHAPTER VII

The return to Tokyo of Sylvia Elliott at this very time seemed an especially kind dispensation of Providence. Kent had seen practically nothing of her since his arrival in Japan. In his eagerness to immerse himself in the Japanese life, to steep himself therein, he had felt as if he had no time for intermingling with the foreign element, had almost resented its intrusion where he had not been able to avoid it. The whites, Americans, British, French and the rest were, after all, commonplace, incapable of affording the stimulus of the new, the attraction of the unknown, the piquancy of the constant zest to peek and penetrate beyond the mysteries behind the *shoji*. He had known people like that all his life; now, in Japan, he wanted to be with the Japanese; in that way only was it possible to attain to the full the charm of living in a foreign country, strange, picturesque, exotic, to taste with the critical appreciation with which a connoisseur sips a rare vintage, in slow sips, the impressions and sensations derivable from the colorful life stirring all about him.

And then she had been in the country most of the time, on sketching tours in the mountain regions about Nikko, Chuzenji, Ikao. He had noted with half-attentive curiosity that in spite of his instinctive avoidance of the foreign element he was pleased to see her again, that she formed an exception. As he came to see her more often, he was surprised, delighted, that instead of intruding as a discordant note in the symphony of life which he was trying to compose by

blending his life in tune to his surroundings, she fitted herself into it, even enchained his pleasure therein. She had the capacity for enjoyment, the appreciative understanding of the essential soul of Japan, which is so rare with foreign women, who, though their eye for beauty admits and even admires the charm of carved temple gate, or picturesquely gnarled pine projecting from rocky crag, stop short with the externals, refuse to extend sympathetic understanding to the people themselves, the Japanese, blinded by the instinctive resentment of the white woman at the competitive charm of womankind of another race. She had none of that. As he did, so she chose to overlook the blots that they might not disturb her enjoyment of the colors. Possibly it was that the artist in her was stronger than the woman. He concluded that it must be so — but what was the difference! He found that when he was with her, delight in the discovery of beauty, of landscape, a bit of garden, the harmonious blending of color in a woman's dress, or even a beautiful face, became heightened, keener, as if concentrated, more clearly defined, through the doubled capacity for appreciation of two minds which functioned harmoniously as one.

For a while they saw much of each other, were constantly together on expeditions into the surrounding country, or, oftener, on haphazard rambles through remote quarters of the great, labyrinthic capital, voyages of discovery in unknown streets where every turn of the road might lead to new adventure, or bizarre incident which might be added to the treasures in their common storehouse of memories. They delighted to lose themselves entirely in some section unfrequented by foreigners, where one might wander about through the whole day without seeing a white face, and then to exercise their ingenuity in

finding their way precariously through the maze to some guiding landmark.

"My God, if my wife had only been like that," or rather, he hastened to amend the thought, if only Isabel had been with him and he might have taught her, guided her to become like this. But instantly his intelligence interrupted disturbingly; Isabel couldn't. She would be like the majority of the women, instinctively antagonistic, magnifying the stupidity of a cook, the petty rascality of a peddler to the point where they warped her entire view of all Japan. It persisted as a voice clamoring at him, and he forced himself to try to think otherwise, as if he might, by forced violence of the voice of his will, over-shout, drown utterly the insistent sardonic irony of his intelligence.

So he came to compel himself to resist the thought, to think of other matters, politics, money, even to work out in his head mathematical problems. But it was difficult at times. After a day with Sylvia, permeated with her presence, returning through winding lanes, past bamboo fences, when the thrill of cicadas mingled with the whimper of unseen samisen, and the moonlight transformed the world into a glamorous black-and-white tracery of silhouetted branches, sharply drawn roof-tree contours standing out against a translucent sky, his entire being would be singing within him, and he would step lightly, head thrown back, whistling, enamored with the world, with life.

And then like a pang, sharply, suddenly, like a stitch in the side, would snap into his brain the inspiration of the devil: "Why all this gayety?" It was as if the damnable thought took shape, personified itself into a hideous, leering, grinning imp, with an insidious wink. "You fool, of course, you are in ——" But he was used to it, was on guard, too quick for the imp; would fling him a mental kick, indignantly,

"Shut up, of course, I am not, you beast." But again, "It is no use. You can't deceive me. You can't even deceive yourself. You know damned well that you are in ——" Would come again violation of his thoughts to calculation of algebra, enumeration of bills due at the end of the month, any beastly thing. He had even tried to think tenderly of Isabel, to recall the high lights of courtship, red-letter days of early marriage, to try to conjure a reluctant hope, to compel himself to wish that she might come back to him, make another attempt to blow into flame the ashes of dead love.

For, of course, he did not love Sylvia. He snapped his defiance back into the teeth of the grinning satyr-face popping forth, irritatingly, from the corners of his mind. He did not love her — with thought of her came weakness, softness — at least, he could not love her, would not. It was impossible; not to be thought of. So long as he was married to Isabel, he would play the game, keep his side of the slate clean, not place himself in the wrong. Popped into his mind an incident of a few days before. He had been dancing with Sylvia at a tea dance at the Imperial Hotel. The orchestra leader, slim, debonair, one of these men who seem capable of radiating vitality, joy of life, had been singing, eyes flashing across the length of his fiddle, leaning forward towards the couples swaying to his rhythm before him, infusing them with his flame. It had been a trivial thing, one of the myriad of new fox-trots which spring forth like lush weeds, the words utterly banal. As Hugh was passing, he had glanced up, his eyes had met those of the happy fiddler for the flash of a moment, and as he sang the words, the silly, inane stuff, "When you play the game of love, are you playing fair," he had laughed to him. It seemed almost as if there had been

the slightest suggestion of a knowing wink, conveying the suggestion that he, the fiddler, was sharer of a secret between the two, and as if he had, friendlily insinuating, tilted his head toward Sylvia. Even at the moment, Kent had been certain that it was all a play of imagination, a trumpery pleasantry sardonically contrived by his accursed imp familiar, but the thing had stuck in his mind with absurdly exaggerated force.

Confound it! It was exactly the opposite thing. He was playing fair. There was not even suggestion of a game of love, of love at all. Platonic love, then? It was almost as if the suggestion had been shouted at him; he could even perceive the ring of sarcastic intonation, the incredulous sneer with which the world usually accompanies the phrase. It made him angry. Why that stupid sneer? Why, after all, should not platonic love be possible? To swine no, of course not. But he did not expect to be a swine, was not one, in fact. If the majority, the ruck of humanity, were too gross to conceive of the possibility, the worse for them. That was none of his affair. He could be, he was capable of intimate association with a beautiful woman unblemished by thought, suggestion, even hint of sex.

The idea came to please him. It seemed capable of placing at an end the indefinite suggestiveness of his thoughts, reduced the whole matter to a concrete basis, the definitiveness of something recognized as an existing phenomenon. His mind became easier. Might flash before him a glimpse of what Karsten, for instance, would say should he have divined his conclusion. He saw in his mind's eye the friendly irony of his indulgent smile. Karsten was not unimaginative, just the contrary: still he had dulled fineness of perception by over-indulgence in affairs of love. History

had examples of it, Dante and Beatrice, and Petrarch and Laura, and —— For the moment he could think of no others. Instantly the imp. "Damned rare, eh!" He snapped his fingers. What was the difference; the rarer, the more precious.

So he drifted on, more happily, more at peace with himself; felt that he might safely, without feeling of guilt or apprehension, continue in this delightful relation; need not studiously, conscientiously confine himself to enjoying only the mind, the sympathy of thought with this woman, but might allow himself, contently, to find pleasure in the play of light on her hair, in letting his eye rest with satisfied appreciation on the curve of her cheek, the contour of her svelte figure. Life was being good to him. Even if an inspiration of a moment might pounce upon him when least expected, "What if there had been no Isabel?" He had gotten himself in hand now; his course was set, he had but to steer watchfully, carefully, but, after all, safely.

And then, just as he had contrived to reduce his problem to safe and definite tangibility, the whole thing dissipated, shattered abruptly into a baffling void as does a glorious, iridescent bubble shimmering brilliantly in the sunlight suddenly vanish into utter nothingness without visible cause or agency. She became elusive. The accustomed places saw her no more. On rare occasions he might run across her, but the circumstances were almost inauspicious, — a meeting on the Ginza, at the Imperial, always with a background of entirely inconsequential persons irritatingly intruding their irritating presence. Even when he might manage to attain an occasional moment alone with her, nothing was gained. She was not cold, not even formal, but without appearing to wish to avoid him, she contrived to do so. There were always reasons,



each one manifestly valid, why she could not accept this or that invitation. There were no more rambles together, no more dances. He marveled at the skill with which she maintained the appearance of continuance of the old friendliness and yet erected, with deft sureness, an invisible barrier. He felt like a fly dashing itself against a clear pane of glass, hopelessly frustrated by the unsurmountable opposition of the invisible. What the devil could be the matter? He racked his brain, trying to seek a cause, to recall whatever incident, some error of omission or commission, careless or clumsy phrase, but always with the same result. He could think of nothing; there was nothing. And she was manifestly not capricious, not a flirt endeavoring to season more highly a man-woman relationship by the spurious artifices of coquetry. It was disquieting, irritating, maddening. What a damnable capacity for torment was possessed by even the best of women! Was that one of the traits of the eternal feminine, an unescapable remnant of the Old Eve, just as all men must have in them some trace of the Old Adam? Probably the phenomenon was nothing very intricate or perplexing to men who knew women, who had experience in diagnosing such symptoms. He had never envied Karsten; had rather been inclined to pity him as one who had dulled his capacity for enjoyment of the best things in female companionship by over-indulgence; still, for the purposes of this occasion, at least, he wished that he possessed his facility with women, whatever advantages his experience might give him for grappling with such problems.

Then, Karsten came to his aid unexpectedly. They were smoking after dinner. Nothing much was being said. Karsten was wandering up and down the floor, chewing the stem of his pipe. Suddenly he

blurted out, apropos of nothing whatever, pipe-stem waving in the direction of Kent:

"I say, Kent, mind you, I am not trying to intrude on your affairs, but, I just wonder, have you ever mentioned to Miss Elliott anything about your wife, anything about your being married?"

"What? What's that?" He was gaping at him surprised, fish-like. "I say, old man, what in the devil are you driving at, anyway?"

He had been thinking of Sylvia just then, forcing his mind to travel wearily over the same old ground, trying to discover some tangible foothold from which to gain his way out from the baffling intangibility, the vagueness of it all. Karsten's question was right in line with his thoughts, fitted in as a marvelously apposite thing, as if he had been trying to work out a fretwork puzzle and Karsten had, by some surprising intuition, dumped before him one of the pieces for which he had been looking to effect the solution. He shook himself together. It seemed as if he must know something, have some idea, anyway, some kind of factor which might aid in puzzling it all out.

He repeated, "And what are you driving at, anyway?" Absurdly, he felt his chest contracting, the pulses in his temples swelling. He had no business to be so excited.

"Well, I was wondering. I came across the fag end of a bit of gossip to-day at the Imperial. Old Mrs. Tinker, the chief lady cat, you know, called me over to her table, at tea. She doesn't usually so favor me, you know. She's had enough to say about my foibles, what she could find out and what she could imagine. But she simply couldn't contain herself. She had just gotten hold of something that was too good to keep, that she must get off her chest to some one, any one, I fancy, and then I was your friend. I must

have been just like a find. Maybe the old lady has some kind of rudimentary, perverted sense of the dramatic — or she may have hoped to get something more in the way of detail out of me. Anyway, she was full with it right up to the neck. She couldn't even show a bit of finesse. She just blurted it at me. She knew, of course, that you were a great friend of mine, and of Sylvia Elliott's, and that you were a man of honor, a gentleman. She took pains to repeat that, several times. But she wondered, she said, 'You know I'm an old woman,' she said, and God knows, she spoke the truth for once in her life. She wondered, the dear old soul, whether you had realized that with a young, innocent girl like Sylvia — And then it came again, like a refrain; she kept saying it, she must have said it a dozen times, 'I am an old woman, you know,' but she wondered, the foul old beast, whether you could really perceive the seriousness of it, the woeful consequences of toying with the affections of an 'innocent girl.' You know how such an old woman can say it so it becomes almost an insult. Good God, even the worst of us have a pride in taking the innocence of such a girl for granted, but such an old cat can contrive to use the term with the most insidious innuendo. Why the devil do our absurd rules of conduct prevent one from kicking an old beast like that. I felt like doing it more than I've ever done it with respect to any man. But there I must stand, deferentially, with a teacup waving in my hand, with a show of courtesy, while she meandered on. You know, it strikes me that such an absolutely useless old woman, an encumbrance on earth, with no apparent purpose than that of making it a worse place to live in for all the rest of us, can, while employing apparently all the ordinary polite phraseology of courteous intercourse, produce more of an ef-

fect of the most vicious foulness than can the most common harlot or the roughest obscenity of a salt-water second mate. By the gods, it seems to me ——”

“Yes, and when you get through cussing old lady Tinker, I’d be obliged to know what the deuce it was all about.” Generally Kent enjoyed Karsten’s vivid circumambience, but now it seemed to him almost irritatingly studied, as if the other were playing him, like a fish. “Get on with your tale.” He felt that the elusive thing, the explanation which he had been ransacking heaven and earth for, was at last within hand’s reach.

“Yes, of course, I beg your pardon. Well, the long and the short of it was that the old girl had been informed that you had not told — that you had taken pains not to tell, was the way she put it, with that sickly, kindly, leering smile which she affects — that you were married. Oh, yes, she had just heard of it. And I was a friend of yours, and didn’t I think that we older people — the smile again — just like that, she and I in the same category, hand in hand — I’d given a thousand yen for the privilege of heaving my tea in her face, hot tea — but would it not be best if you were spoken to about it, given a hint, though — you could see the satisfaction she got from spitting forth the full load of venom she had been gathering from the start — she was happy to know that Miss Elliott had been informed, fully informed, from a reliable source, most reliable, in fact, from the very source from which she, herself, had her information.

“And then she let me go. It must have seemed a good day’s work to her, letting loose that bit of trouble on the world. I can imagine her sitting at home now, with her cat, or her parrot or whatever she has got, and turning that bit of mischief over

in her mind, cocking her head on one side and scheming how she may elaborate on it, add a few details, artistic touches, and where she may carry her tale tomorrow where it may have the most effect. And, by the way, I wondered at the time who her source of information might be, and it struck me — she had just been sitting with that red-headed Wilson girl from the American Auto Company, the two of them with their heads together thick as thieves — I was wondering whether she might not be the serpent. Do you know her?"

So that was it. For the moment Kent was confused by a clash of conglomerate emotions; relief that, petty as the whole thing was, he at least knew now the exact state of affairs, had gained a foothold whence he might find his way out of the wilderness of uncertainty — and then, on the other hand, the abominable, spiteful malignity of that girl, that Wilson individual. Flashed into his mind the incident at the dance on board the *Tenyo Maru*, and his intuitive premonition that from the incidentally aroused enmity of this woman would come eventually a venomous sting of malice.

Oh, the damned —— cat. He felt that he had never so absolutely detested, utterly contemned a woman. "Yes, I know her. I chanced — she was such a wantonly malicious beast — to offend her on the *Tenyo*. Karsten, for what inscrutable reason does Providence create such women and allow them to cumber the earth?"

"And why not?" The other shrugged his shoulders. "The question arises with all kinds of women. Have you not at times, when you have fortuitously chanced on some woman, some seductive beauty who by the mere contact of a moment, glance of an eye, soft murmur of a few words, smashes down what-

ever defenses you may have laboriously contrived against being enveloped in the net of the charm of women — and then, when quietude of mind, the state of being tranquil, at peace, normal, is, against your will, in spite of all you may do, abruptly shattered, and when you feel yourself again racked in the nervous tension of desire, passion, love, whatever you may call it — have you not then, Kent, found yourself asking God whatever can be His intention in letting loose upon earth women like that whose sole purpose seems to be to steal away from men what little chance they may have of being at peace? And as it is with that kind, I suppose it is with the others, the plain women, envious, malicious, mischief-making. What can be the purpose of their existence, unless it is to counterbalance those others, to add the other ingredient with which it has pleased Providence to contrive this madhouse of conflicting elements of humanity which make up this world.”

But Kent was paying no attention. What the deuce could he do? He felt that now, when he had through fortuitous good fortune obtained the solution of the riddle, his problem should have been almost solved; but, incongruously, he seemed to have made no headway whatever. Now, what should he do? His brain seemed to be void, to be incapable of functioning. The feeling that Karsten was watching him, was expecting him to pursue the subject, to carry on with it, made him feel uncomfortable, irritated him, as if Karsten had been insistently curious.

“I wonder what the Cabinet intends to do about the Russian policy question.” The remark escaped him almost involuntarily. He might as well, he felt, have suggested a query as to what the weather was likely to be the day after to-morrow, anything, however irrelevant. The fierce pudicity which causes a

man to shrink from having bared before the eyes of another man the intimate processes of his affections, made him wish, desperately, to steer Karsten to some other subject. He repeated it nervously, and even as he was speaking he felt the futility thereof. "Now, I wonder what the Cabinet will do?"

"Yes, what will the Cabinet do?" Karsten was leaning back in his chair, regarding him ironically. "Oh, hell!" He turned and went over to fill his pipe.

And, now he had driven Karsten away from the subject, it came to Kent that that was just what he did not want to do. His own brain was as inert as mud. Suddenly he was overcome with need for advice, sympathy, with the desire to discuss the thing, talk it over, to get a helping hand to swing his mind over the dead-center where it was now hanging.

"I wish I knew what to do." He blurted it out. Even that—to get the thing articulated, to place it in form of words—seemed to make an advance, to make it more concrete. "Now, what can I do to set myself right with Sylvia?"

"You love her?" Rather than a question, it seemed like the seeking of definite confirmation, for the purpose of establishing a postulate for further logical treatment of the problem. Of course, that wouldn't do. The uneasy sense of evasion, of making the very beginning with what—he could not evade it—was not essentially true, irritated him. He snapped back, "No, of course, not." The harsh abruptness of his tone grated in his own ears. That was no way to talk to a man who was, after all, offering sympathy, a friend. He hastened to smooth it over.

"I like her. I am extremely fond of her. I think more of her than of any other woman, except ——" He had been about to say "my wife," but he caught himself, disgusted at the facility with which he had

almost slid into smug hypocrisy. "I am fond of her, I say; I place every possible value on her friendship, yes, platonic friendship, if you please." He glared at Karsten, ready for fierce rejoinder, anticipating ironic drawing of the mouth, incredulous gesture.

But Karsten let it pass. "And what have you yourself thought of doing?"

"But, hang it, man, that's just it. What the devil can I do? If she were a sweetheart of mine, if there had been any sort of a love relation, or even the possibility of the establishment of one, the potentiality existing when a man who is free, marriageable, has been on terms of fairly intimate friendship with a woman, then I might reasonably go to her and make some kind of explanation. But now, what can I do? I can't go up to her and say, 'Here, my dear, I am sorry if I've overlooked telling you that I'm married. I'm sorry if I've caused you to have futile expectations' — or just go up to her and remark, quite casually, 'Oh, by the way, you know I have a wife.' I fancy that if I had the wit, the experience that you have, for instance, I might manage to contrive some subtle means, something to set this thing straight, for, honestly — you'll have to take my word for it — what I have said about the whole thing being just friendship is absolutely and literally true."

"Just like with a man?"

"Yes, just like with a man."

"Then, that's the answer. Treat the affair just as if she were a man. If gossip had placed you in a false position with a man, you would go to him, wouldn't you, and have a straight talk with him? Why can't you give a woman, a woman whom you think so much of, credit for having as much broadmindedness, intelligence, as a man? You hint about my experience with women, about subtleties. Listen, if you will take ad-



vice from the depths of my ignorance, I will tell you one thing — and it is something that I was stupid enough not to discover for years — the sort of thing that is so obvious that you pass right over it without seeing it — which is that with women, at least the right sort of women, the best course, the only sensible course, is to tell them the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To some men, those who think that in dealing with women one requires some specially intricate means, that would seem the very culmination of subtlety, but it is, I am earnestly convinced, the one and only way.”

Yes, it sounded easy. He ruminated, turned the suggestion over and over. The theory seemed all right, but when he came to translate it into action, when he came to think of how he would approach her, how he would open the subject, what he would say, it became utterly impractical, impossible.

Karsten read his mind. “Yes, I know that it is easy to give advice in such matters and quite another thing to carry out the suggestion. But the only thing for you to do is to keep turning the thing over in your mind, familiarize yourself with the idea. Then, gradually, as the strangeness thereof wears away, when it no longer stuns your brain with the impact of something astounding, precipitate, you will find it becoming more rational to you. Eventually you may find that working out the thing becomes fairly natural, even relatively easy. What is there about it that sticks you, anyway?”

“Blessed if I know; no one particular point, the whole thing more or less. I know how I myself have always been able to see just what the other chap should do, how it has irritated me often to see some fellow pursue an absolutely foolish course with respect to some woman, doing exactly what he shouldn’t do, pur-

blind to the absolutely obvious. I have felt like taking him by the shoulder and saying, 'Here, Tom, Dick, or Bill, or whoever you may be, can't you see, you fool, that what this particular girl wants is this, that, or the other. It is like watching a chess game. The onlooker sees the approaching mate much sooner than the man who is playing the game. And in this kind of a thing another can't possibly see into, or appreciate just what is going on in the other chap's mind; estimate the infinitely fine manifestations, the super-delicate emotional vibrations so imperceptible that the man himself can only barely feel them without being able to analyze them. And, for one thing, I think just one of the flaws in your theory is that the premises are not altogether well taken. You say, 'If the relation is just like that of man with man, then treat it like that.' And in a way it is; but then again, in another way it isn't. It can't be. With a man the idea of sex relation is necessarily absent, but with a woman, even when neither has it in mind at all, it cannot be avoided altogether, ignored. Take this case. I'm sure that I never thought of it. In fact, I'm sure that she never thought of it either. The very circumstance that quite likely I never did mention my wife, that I've not the slightest recollection whether I ever did so or not, shows, doesn't it, that my mind was entirely free from the idea. So, with a man, there would be no problem at all; but with a woman, with Sylvia, no matter how delicately I approach the matter, the suggestion must come into evidence that one fears, one thinks, that she must, to some extent at least, have had in mind the fact that she is a woman and I a man. It is virtually as if one said, 'Here, I'm afraid that you may not be quite clear that this is purely a friendly relation, that sex doesn't enter into it.' Damn it, I can't express the thought without get-

ting it into phrases that are blunt, clumsy; but you get the idea, don't you? I'm hanged if I can see how I could do it without becoming positively insulting.

"And then there's another thing, something that really hurts me more than any other phase of it all, and that is, Why should a girl like Sylvia, clean, sweet-minded, sensible, be affected by a thing like that? It is almost as if she, in fact, did suspect me of having really had in the back of my mind all the time some such insidious intention. And still, I am absolutely sure that she cannot have. By the gods, Karsten, the ways of women are something absolutely inscrutable to me."

"Oh, that's simple enough. It takes no mysterious knowledge of sex to explain that. Use your common sense, man. I'll admit that that struck me also, for a moment, and I was a bit disappointed in her; but, if you reason for a moment, it is plain enough. It's not that, not with Sylvia. It is nothing to her whether you mentioned your wife or not, whether you have a wife or not. She's not the kind of a girl who looks upon every male who is fortuitously thrown in her way as a potential husband, whose entire scheme of existence is bound up in the idea of ensnaring a provider. And I'm sure that she cannot believe that you had any philandering in mind. Trust a woman for that, especially one so delicately constituted as Sylvia. And even the most stupid ones, any woman, since it is part of the very essence of being a woman, knows instinctively, by intuition, when the sex element, however subtly, is hovering about. No, what has affected Sylvia, the reason why she keeps you at arm's length, is the manner in which the thing has been presented to her. Can't you imagine the insidious, slimy suggestiveness of that Wilson individual, coming to her with her, 'You really ought to

know, my dear'; how noisome the mere idea must have been to her that any one, the Wilson thing, all the rest of the gossips, were turning this thing over and over on their salacious tongues, this innocent, patently clean relation existing between her and you. It must have been immeasurably offensive to her, intolerable. Put yourself in her place for a moment. Probably she may have been as reluctant as you are to give up this pleasant friendship. But what could she do? Being a woman, hedged in by the myriad conventions which tie up a woman's freedom of action much more than they do a man's, she'd find herself in an even more difficult position than that which you are in and which puzzles you so. No, old man, that's all plain enough; and if you find that you can't bring yourself to take the bull by the horns and talk it out with her, why, the only thing you can do is to let the thing rest for the time being. Neither seek her nor evade her. Don't increase her difficulties by asking her to go about with you; to a girl so essentially honest and honorable it must be extremely annoying to be forced to resort to the small lies, the petty prevarications of convention, to invent excuses—but don't evade her either. Be as courteous, friendly and frank as ever, and, above all, be natural. As time passes the gossips will find other victims and eventually you can, if you are careful, tactful, drift back into the old relation. Yes, it's rotten, isn't it, that in this world such damnable machinations as breaking up a clean, beautiful relation as that between you and Sylvia can be possible, and that it can be carried out triumphantly, in the name of purity, of virtue. By the gods, I think at times that if the prudes were less busy, the world might be a much cleaner place to live in."

Karsten was right. Kent felt an intense gratitude

to him for having dispelled thus surely, by the incontrovertible logic of plain sense, the rankling doubt that had assailed him, strive as he might against it, about Sylvia. It placed the whole situation in a much better light. Sylvia was all right. The essence of the relation between them had not been vitiated. All this was but the disturbing echo of something from outside, annoying, distressing, but in the end surely ineffectual. So he would follow Karsten's advice. Everything would come out all right.

She had brought to the window the tall bamboo cage, had opened the tiny gate of intricately interwoven strips. All about her stood trunks and boxes. From the back came the clatter of the carters carrying stuff out to the cart. She had waited with this to the very last. Now she stood back, watching the lark as it hopped about on the bottom of the cage, eyeing curiously the opened door. She had often been disturbed by the thought that she should not keep this bird a prisoner; but she had been assured that it had been born in captivity, that it would prefer the comfortable life, protected behind the slender bamboo bars. Now, it seemed as if it really did. It was in no hurry to grasp at freedom.

The bird hopped up into the opening and sat, cocking its head, as if in doubt, peering into the world before it. Now, what would it do; would it really be happier in the protection of confinement, or would it have the courage to grasp the freedom of unknown distances?

Unknown distances! She felt that she herself was uneasily uncertain, tremulous at the idea of setting behind her the small world into which she had fitted herself so agreeably. She was cowardly, like the bird, then, not venturesome enough to face the unknown.

No, it was not that. She must be frank with herself; her cowardice lay in not daring to remain; and, moreover, she was not acting honestly to Kent. The suggestion of the Wilson creature, the mere effrontery of her making such an insinuation, had dumbfounded her. Of course, she had known always — so long as she had known him; on board the *Tenyo* — that he was married. She could not even remember whether he had told her, had ever mentioned it, or whether she had come to know from an extraneous source, ship's gossip. It had been a matter of no moment whatever, utterly inconsequential. And to him it must have been inconsequential too; a thing which had no bearing whatever on their relation. The effrontery of this woman, and of the others, all those who, she had said, were now whispering among themselves about them. She had smiled at her assurance that she had known, that it was a matter of no consequence one way or the other, the incredulous smile, updrawn brows, that was an insult in itself. And then the hard shamelessness with which she had tried to pursue the matter, to gain more pabulum for gossip; endeavoring to establish a pretense of intimacy which was entirely inexistent, she had hoped, she said, meretriciously solicitous, that she did not really love him, that this would not hurt her. Sylvia might have taken her by the hair, dragged her forth, thrown her out, her fierce desire for primitive methods of combat, to rend this foully insulting female into tatters, had surprised her. The intense repression, the nervous bewildered casting about for escape, had left her trembling, white.

And when she had finally gotten rid of the woman somehow, and had sat down to compose herself to think, she had been confused, bewildered, unable to seize upon some starting point from which to develop a line of thought. Instinctively she wanted to hide, to

shelter herself in some place where all this foulness could not reach her, to escape. It had always been her intention to wander on beyond Japan, to grapple with new landscapes, new colors, feathery palm fronds swaying beneath the stars, the iridescent brilliance of the tropics. She had already long overstayed the time she had originally decided to devote to Japan. She had found so much more material than she had expected, and—yes, of course, if she were to think this thing out, she must be entirely honest, probe into herself with the dissecting knife no matter how she might shrink—yes, the truth was that she had not wished to abandon her friendship with Kent. Yes, friendship. It had been just that, only that. That, at least, she might say with absolute truth. True, there had been moments where the thought had come to her that if he had been free, their relation might have been enhanced, vivified by the rosy light of romance. She had even—she was going to have this thing out with herself, go to the very most intimate essence thereof—yes, there had been a time when she had wondered what was really the relation between Kent and his wife; was there not a possibility that freedom might come to him? But she had put the thought behind her, ashamed, disgusted with herself that she could thus be tempted to contemplate gaining a love which was the rightful property of another, insidiously coveting affection which belonged rightfully to that other woman. So, even though it was evident that the day might come when the barrier might be removed, she had refused to consider the possibility, as an unworthy thought. The line between considering the potentiality and wishing that it might be brought about was too fine. And now that she had gotten past all that, and their relation had crystallized safely on a firmly constructed foundation, she was forced to leave it all. But

was it not cowardly thus to concede victory to the mischief makers, to desert Kent? Would it not be cleaner, more worthy to remain, stick it out. She wished she were strong enough to stay, to continue, defiantly, the relation, safe in her knowledge that not the slightest suspicion of a thought of sex entered into the minds of Kent and herself. And still, there was no escape from the certainty that the thought could not be ignored; the gossips had injected it. She must always wonder whether Kent had heard what they thought. He must wonder whether she had. They had soiled their friendship with the foulness of their insinuating suggestion. No matter how she and Kent might try to erase it from their minds, some faint trace, some ineradicable smudge must remain.

The bird was hopping about on the window sill, lifting its wings in little tentative flaps, restless, fluttering in indecision. She stepped up to it. Why didn't the silly little thing have the initiative to make the break into freedom, to grasp the alluring promises of the new, unknown beyond. She watched it. "Oh, we are poor things, you and I. But, out you go." With her hand she pushed it gently out. It had to use its wings to save itself. It fluttered; then it stretched them out, strongly, boldly, circled slowly, then more surely, gained upwards, rose higher and higher, disappeared in the blue.



## CHAPTER VIII

### Divorce!

Kent read the letter over again, carefully, laboriously, for his thoughts would not concentrate on the sentences. He had to force himself to bring his mind on them. The letters from Isabel had shown indifference, every evidence of having been written as a matter of duty in their painstaking regularity, one a month; they had been cold even; but he had never for a moment suspected that she would, suddenly, without leaving room for discussion, thus make the end bluntly, finally.

She wrote that the petition had been filed in court. The grounds were desertion. The summons would probably be in the same mail. Desertion. It struck him as wantonly malicious treachery. He had been careful always to send her the regular allowance which they had agreed upon before he left for Japan, and even more. He could certainly show in court — Still, what was the use? He would not contest the case. If she wanted divorce, well, let her have it. A man was a fool who would try to hold a woman against her desire. And then, after all, why should he care? His affection for her had long since dissipated. The adage that absence makes the heart grow fonder — he had more than halfway believed that it might work out — but it had not in his case, nor, evidently, in hers either. He had no cause to object. On the contrary, she was giving him his freedom. It was the logical thing, after all.

Now, if that had come a year ago, before Sylvia

had left Tokyo? Isabel must even then have considered divorce. She had probably done so even before he left America. Why could she not have done it then, when he and Sylvia — Would she have married him? Plainly, she had liked him, but this other? Still, there would have been a chance. And now, now when opportunity had finally come, it was so absurdly futile. He had no means of reaching Sylvia. She had disappeared utterly, had gone as if she had vanished into space. No one appeared to know where she might be. Evidently she had wished to disassociate herself entirely from Tokyo, to sever every thread that might connect her with Japan. He had written a couple of times on chance clews. She had been seen by some one somewhere along the upper Yangtze. A note in the personal column of a Hongkong paper showed that she had gone from that place to Macao. Report had it that she had visited Singapore. He had written each time, but nothing had ever come of it. So he had given up thought of her, forced himself to blot that chapter out of his life, to consider it a definitely closed incident. Now, it was too late. Even if he knew where to find her, what would she say should he gallop up to her the moment he was free. One could never know how a woman might take things. And then she would by this time undoubtedly have found new friends, might be engaged, married, for all he might know. No, even if he might find her, should she have been placed out of his reach through some other man, that, he knew, must hurt him like the devil. It would reopen, grievously lacerate the old wound which seemed now to have all but healed. After all, he had come to appreciate, enjoy in recent months his safety from emotional turmoil. One risked too much, paid too heavily for the raptures of infatuation. He would remain safe.

So that phase of the situation was disposed of. He would allow himself to consider it no more. Now for the other phases.

He lit his pipe and leaned back to think it over, to reason it out. Logically he should be pleased; but he could not make himself feel so. It was an ugly word. "desertion"; smacked of being a scoundrel. Still, of course, divorces were common things, and every one knew that the law required, for some obscure reason, that the grounds must always be clothed in terms implying disgrace of some kind. Well, let it go.

Still, he was oddly dissatisfied. He tried to analyze his feelings. Gradually, as he smoked, it came to him that what he resented was the suddenness of entire change in his status of life, the necessity for making new adjustments. He would now be alone, under a changed moral code, a different mode of life. Still, he was being made free. What he lost was, of course, only obligations. To blazes with the entire business!

He crumpled the letter and threw it out of the window impulsively. He would be rid of the whole thing, like that; would write her to go ahead. It was the end. Undoubtedly he would soon find himself pleased, as he should be, that a relation had been severed which there could be no possible reason to continue.

"Kent-san."

It was a woman's voice, low, clear. He looked about, startled out of his thoughts. There she was, across the alley, in her window, his geisha neighbor. Through the bamboo bars she was holding out to him something white. He recognized the crumpled letter. What a perverse grotesquery of fate that his divorce announcement should, eccentrically, cause his acquaintance with this woman, this professional in the arts of affection, whom he had heretofore known only mutely,

through her formal courtesy of a smile when she had happened to meet his eye from her window.

"It came right in through the window. It frightened me. It hit me right on the head." She was laughing, but her eyes asked for explanation. Of course — one did not throw things through windows, even at geisha.

"Pardon me. I was angry. It was bad news. My wife in America is seeking divorce." He caught himself. It was stupid to plump it out to an utter stranger; but the idea had filled his mind, had dominated him so entirely that the words had slipped without thinking.

"*O kinodoku sama*, I am so sorry." The smiling face became a mask of polite regret. "Do you love her?"

The amazing frankness of the Orient in intimately personal matters in contrast to its reticence where the West is frank!

"No, I don't care a bit." As he spoke he felt with surprised satisfaction that he really did not care, that his resentment was fading. Evidently it did him good to get this thing out of his system, to speak out about it, even to this new-found geisha friend. It was not so incongruous, after all. Was she not supposed to be an expert in matters of the heart.

Her serious expression vanished instantly. She laughed. They did really laugh like "tinkling silver bells," some of these Japanese girls. "Then you will find another woman. Ah, but here in Japan, what will you do? Here we have only the *kitanai* Japanese girls."

"*Kitanai*," literally "unclean," used in the sense of "unworthy" as the Japanese always speaks, perfunctorily, of what is his own. The unjustness of the phrase bewildered him for the moment, as he thought for words to express indignant refutation, protest that

the Japanese girl was, of course, the very opposite of "*kitanai*."

He started to answer. The murmur of a voice came to him from the unseen background of the girl's room. The face of an old woman appeared behind her.

"I was just calling at the shaved-ice man," said the girl, over her shoulder. "But he didn't hear me. He has gone." Evidently the elder woman, probably a sort of duenna, had asked her what she was doing. He admired her instant wit. She smiled at him hurriedly, surreptitiously. He caught the odd charm of the wink of her long almond eye. Then the *shoji* closed.

Well! A bizarre episode. But a charming one. He was in a happy frame of mind. It was a good augury. Evidently he was not so badly hurt, when a pretty face could so easily dispel his resentment. Divorce; it was only proper that his marriage be ended, an unsatisfactory chapter. Let the thing take its course.

He decided to place the letter in a drawer where he kept things which he wished to remain unseen by the unknown one who periodically ransacked his desk. He had left it open purposely, and at the top he had placed a layer of old papers, which must have been seen often by the intruder, and which could no longer tempt his curiosity. Below the papers he kept the other things, his wife's letters mainly, and then Kimiko-san's slippers. He had been surprised to receive them in the mail, a few days after their first dance in Tsurumi. It had amused him that she had taken him thus literally. It was dangerous to be jocose with Japanese girls; they were likely to take things to the letter. But he had been pleased at the possession, at having this dainty, unique souvenir of a delightful incident of his life in Japan.

He was surprised to find that the investigator had evidently been there. The ruse had not worked. The

slippers were not in the position where he had left them. Still, it made little difference. He would take them home. The trophy would amuse Jun-san.

Jun-san was intensely interested, pleaded that he tell her from whom he had obtained them. He always enjoyed seeing her in her gay moods; she was generally so serious, almost melancholy. He had planned to bring about this air of gayety, that he might, as had been the case when he was chatting with his geisha neighbor, forget unpleasant thoughts. But it failed. The humor dissipated. The serious thoughts recurred insistently. He could see that Karsten noticed his pre-occupation. The idea came to him to tell Karsten all about it, talk it out with him. It would do him good; one always reasoned more clearly when one placed one's thoughts in words to another; and then Karsten had been known in San Francisco as a man with unusual experience with women, had had the reputation of being an expert, in those days, in such matters..

So after dinner, when they were sitting upstairs, as usual, looking over the blaze of the geisha quarter below, he told him. "It is not so much that I care," he concluded. "There was no longer such a thing as affection — on either side. But I can't help feeling a vague sense of trouble, of unrest. I am fairly commonplace. I don't give much thought to self-analysis and that sort of thing. I was married; it was a state of affairs, a condition. I had become used to it. It governed my relations to women. I followed the traditional moral code of marriage, gave no thought to such matters. It was plain sailing; I played the game with my wife; there could be no other women; it was an easy frame of mind. And now it seems as if suddenly I am at sea without sailing orders, as if I were captain of a ship in mid-ocean and suddenly find that I have no compass course, no destination. And,

of course, one must have one, must decide where one is going. You would say that it makes no difference, that as I have not seen my wife for a year or more, the thing is essentially the same. But it isn't. I am bewildered by a feeling that my status is utterly different, cataclysmically changed. I am like a life prisoner who has without warning been taken out of a cell where he has lain for years, passively, without need of thought of what he should do with life, and who is then suddenly placed in the midst of the sunlit city. He feels he is free, must do something, wants to do something, but somehow, oddly, misses the quiet impassivity, the lack of responsibility of his cell. I know that there is no reason why I shouldn't live to-morrow as I did yesterday, but the fact is that for some reason it seems impossible. There is the sense of an entirely new condition of life which overwhelms me, and I want to, I feel I must respond to it, in some way, but — I know I talk like a fool. I am hanged if I can explain coherently — but I wish I knew what I want to do."

"I think you are doing the best thing just now," said Karsten. "Talk it out of your system. After all, it is a thing you will eventually decide for yourself, gradually. You need be in no hurry. I know just how you feel. You know I was divorced, too. Only in my case another woman, whom I cared for, threw me over at the same time. I went through the same thing. I don't pretend to be able to give advice. In such matters a man must act on his own. But, since we have come to the intimate things in our lives, I don't mind telling you how I fared. One may profit from the foolishness of others."

He smoked silently for a while, evidently gathering his thoughts. "My marriage turned out just like yours," he began suddenly. "There was no reason

why it shouldn't have turned out well, only it didn't. We simply grew tired of each other, for the usual reason, too much intimate daily contact. When one sees every day, morning after morning, a woman in a dressing gown, with her hair down, going through the process of elaborating her attractions, careless of one's presence, it takes the glamor out of the illusion. A man shaving, seen every morning, can hardly be an inspiring spectacle. Crudely put, that was about all there was to it. Came the divorce. It was the only reasonable thing. I felt that I should be pleased, but, just like you, I felt bewildered, that I had lost my bearings.

"I drifted for a while, but I was agitated, nervous, febrile; felt that I should have done with women, but the very fact that I had my liberty, that I could do as I pleased, kept running in my mind. It gave me no rest. I had no moral scruples. You know I am a Dane. The family is one of these old tradition-ridden clans that you find in Europe. Everything must be governed by precedent set by people who have been dead for ages. In my tribe the woman element has always been predominant. When I was still in school my uncles impressed on me the family code — never touch a friend's wife or his daughter, and never cause a woman regret. Simple, isn't it? If such things worked, it would probably be as good, at least for those whom it fitted, as any other, but such things are not nostrums.

"Anyway, I felt then that as long as I lived up to that, I was all right. Then Sanford, of the *San Francisco Herald*, you know, gave me a piece of advice. He quoted Lawrence Hope's verse recommending to 'love only lightly,' to pluck the pleasant, superficial flowers of love and to avoid the thorns by not allowing yourself to become too devoted to any one woman. I



took the advice too seriously. You remember that during my last years in San Francisco I was just a roué, a libertine, a swine. Instead of giving me rest, peace of mind, I became worse off than ever. Then accident brought me to Japan. It did me good. What had bothered me was, I discovered, not lust for women, but only desire for excitement; but, of course, as you know, in our well-ordered civilization a man can get excitement, change, new impressions and experiences out of few things, politics, sports, gambling, business perhaps, but, if he is cursed with an imagination, mainly women. When I came here, all the new life, the new sights, interested me so much that after awhile I found myself rational again. I played a bit with the geisha, down there, but temperately, sensibly. Then, finally, accident brought me a woman, a Japanese woman, for whom I felt real affection, whom I really cared for. I found that I wanted no others. I was absolutely faithful to her, not because I had to be, nor because I felt that I ought to be, but because I wanted to be. That is where the relation without benefit of clergy works better than the institution of marriage. It is more likely to last because of the absence of the feeling that one must be faithful as a matter of obligation. I had come to the conclusion that monogamy is the only rational, natural thing, one man for one woman, one woman for one man. I would like to see some kind of marriage invented that would work effectively. In my case, I was happier than I had ever been. I had peace, content, I thought I had solved my life. — Then my — my best friend seduced the woman."

As he talked, Karsten had been pacing up and down the narrow veranda which, now the *shoji* had been removed on account of the heat, formed part of the room. Now he stopped and stood staring out over

the city, smoking silently. Suddenly he turned, faced Kent.

"I am afraid that there has not been as much as I thought in all this for you to draw a moral from. I'll be more specific. What I was trying to drive at was this: why don't you, in a tentative way, try the 'love lightly.' That I made a mess of it, at first, in San Francisco, was my own fault. One may take an overdose of any remedy. But here in Japan it is somewhat different. First of all, there is no sense in deliberately going out stalking such adventure. The kind you find that way, picking up with the first woman who crosses your path, doesn't pan out. But keep your mind open, ready to seize upon opportunity — it will come. In fact, I have rather wondered that you have not come to it, in spite of your principle, though, by the way, I rather admire the fact that you have stuck to it. But I have been watching you — one can't help watching a man whom one likes when living together as we do — and I think that it is with you as with Kipling's Tomlinson — if you will forgive the paraphrase — that 'the roots of sin are there.' You take too much interest in the life, and color, and movement that you see all about you. The unique charm of these Japanese women has gotten its insidious white fingers on you. That principle of yours was all that held you back, wasn't it? Now that's gone — *le deluge!* No, maybe not quite that, but I expect to see you soon studying Japanese life and character by the only means through which it can be studied with something resembling complete understanding — through some woman. As a matter of fact, there is no reason why you shouldn't, and there is every reason why you should. It is your business as a newspaperman to get inside the Japanese mind as intimately as you can. You know that it cannot be done through the men; the

bar of nationality, race, is constantly between you and perfect frankness. But with women sex is bigger than race. When a woman cares for you, she looks upon you as a man, not as an alien. She gives you her heart, her innermost mind, without thought of nationality. You understand me, don't you. I don't mean that you should deliberately, cold-bloodedly stalk a woman for the purpose of dissecting her soul and using the results for calculated, mercenary purposes, just to reduce them to copy. What I mean is that you are now free to follow when inclination in the form of a woman beckons you; only be careful that you go into it only as a game, and let the woman understand that it is only a game. At least part of the old family code is good — that to the effect that one must not cause a woman to suffer. So be careful how you play. You have heard, as I have heard a thousand times, that these women are cold, passionless. It is a lie. I know it. Their capacity for affection, devotion, sacrifice, is as great as that of our women; sometimes I think it is even greater. And their poor little souls are delicate, sensitive. They are like children, who brood over and magnify sorrows which we might consider fairly trivial. And then they have their heads still filled with feudal romance. They read their paper-covered novels seeking with noble sacrifice for love and all that, *shinju*, double suicide, you know, where the lovers kill themselves together. We had a case last year right here in the quarter below, where a geisha and a student threw themselves into the Kegon waterfall, at Nikko, which is the most fashionable thing. One reads of cases where friends who get wind of the intention of the lovers insist on joining the party, and then there is a triple suicide. They get their heads filled with this kind of romance, picture themselves as heroes and heroines in the high lights of

melodrama, imagine how the papers will sound their names from one end of Japan to the other. It may be a bit hard for the practical American mind to understand, but the Japanese have an odd, introspective, often a bit hysterical psychology, something like the Russians, I often think, like characters out of Dostoevsky.

"So, to sum it all up, I think it will be a good thing for you to leave the latchstring of your heart hanging out a bit that some little hand may take a pull at it by chance. It will be good for your present state of mind, and it will be good for your work. I am not joking. Not only will it give you insight into Japanese character such as you may get in no other way, but, if you are at all like me, you may find in some girl, if not exactly inspiration, whatever that is, at least some kind of subtle sympathy that helps and pushes you along. I myself, in my time, under just such circumstances, did some mighty good work, or came near accomplishing it, but now, damn it!"

He snapped his fingers, flung out in impatient gesture. The pause was so sudden it produced, conflictingly, the effect of an abrupt sound, a trumpet blare in hushed stillness. Kent looked up. Jun-san had noticed it, too. Squatting on her silk *zabuton* in the background, her sewing had dropped to her lap, and she was looking at Karsten wonderingly, solicitously. She never spoke in English; it was generally accepted that she did not understand it, but Kent wondered whether she did not really understand more than they thought, whether she might not intuitively, from intonation, gesture, aided by such words as she must have picked up, gain at least some idea of the drift of their conversation.

The silence became uncomfortable, exasperating. "But why don't you take it up again? You are no

man to mope about. You are not doing anything, just killing time reading magazines and novels. How can that satisfy you in the long run. Why, then, don't you take some of the advice that you have just given me?"

"I can't, or at least I won't, on account of — That is, the woman is still here, in Tokyo, and I want to show her. It may seem to you contradictory, absurd, perverse. It doesn't sound logical, except, possibly, as a sort of heaping of coals on her head, to show her that I, at least, am faithful. I never told her what I knew, never blamed her. I think that in this way she is getting punishment far more subtle than anything I could inflict by abusing her, or by running after other women. Something must be going on in her mind. Still, who am I that I should have a right to punish any woman for turning to another man, after my sort of life? I only got what I deserved, after all. Anyway, my position happened to be such that I couldn't speak out, couldn't jump on the man or the woman. That rather governed my course. For, of course, one doesn't in that way, in such a case, when one is still agitated, shattered by anger, jealousy, disappointment, in all that whirl of emotions, just sit down and deliberately shape out a definite course of procedure, I shall do this, and I shall do that. No, one stewes about, waits to figure it out, to decide what to do when one has become calmer, and then, if one has done nothing at the moment of crisis, at the impulse of sudden discovery, consternation, passion, then one gradually drifts into accepting the course which things naturally take, the path of least resistance. Yes, that's undoubtedly it, the path of least resistance."

He shook out his pipe into a huge brass bowl which was kept in the room for that purpose; took out his knife, began with over-careful deliberation to carve out the lava-like incrustations from the bowl.

"But the work you were doing?" Kent wanted to bring the conversation into a smoother channel. He was nervous, uncomfortable, with a sense of something undefinably grievous, tragic, as if it were, hovering, indefinitely threatening, closing about them from the darkness outside.

"The work!" Karsten kept scraping at the pipe bowl, methodically held it to the light, inspected it. "It took the heart out of me, this revelation, the sudden shock of it. It had been too perfect, this working away, always in festival spirits, in the atmosphere of affection, devotion, love, damn it, to use the banal old word. I thought I had the rest of my life all well ordered, that peace had come at last. I am too old to start again, and then, anyway, as I told you, there were other reasons. So the work — I have never looked at it since. But," he seemed struck by a sudden thought. "Jun-san," he was still intent with his pipe and did not look up. "Jun-san. Bring out the *kodomo*."

"*Kodomo*," child. The word puzzled Kent. What the devil — ?

He looked past Karsten, as he sat there doggedly scraping at his pipe, to Jun-san. She had risen from her *zabuton*, was looking at the man with wonder. It grew into consternation; was it apprehension, fear? But she had turned and was going to the *todana*, wall closet, was drawing from it papers, loose and in bundles, reaching into the depth of the recess, pulling out still more. Then she turned and came towards them, arms filled, held in front of her. She advanced hesitatingly. By God, she was trembling; her eyes were misty with tears. Kent jumped up, but she did not look at him. In front of Karsten she stopped, held her burden towards him, silent, trembling. He laid away his pipe finally, looked up at her, stretched

out his hands. She moved still nearer, as if to pass the papers over to him. Then her hands fell away, bundles dropping, loose papers fluttering to the floor, into the brass bowl. Karsten had risen, patted the woman on the shoulder tenderly, as one would a child. It was the first time Kent had seen him caress her. "Oh, you poor little girl, you poor little girl," the man's voice was hoarse, broken. "Come, you had better go to your house." She was weeping openly now, shaking. "Forgive me, Jun-san. Come."

The sliding door closed behind her. Karsten turned to Kent. "I might as well tell you now, of course. The woman was Jun-san." He turned abruptly to the papers, began gathering them. "These are nothing much, after all, Kent. Only notes of various kinds for a great Japanese drama that I thought I might construct. The Danes have a proverb that every sow thinks that her own pigs are the best. Probably I did the same." He carried the papers to the *todana*, put them out of sight. "We have had a melodramatic evening, haven't we, Kent-san, with your troubles and mine. It seems as if women must ever be the cause of our sorrows, yes, and our joys. *Shikataganai*. It can't be helped. Now let us have a drink and go to bed."

They had their drink. Karsten went to the adjoining room where he slept. Kent started downstairs to his room. At the head of the stairway he noticed something dark, bulky in the half-light, moving a little; his ear caught a sharp indrawn breath. It was Jun-san. A wave of intense pity swept over him. He wanted to say something to her, to comfort her, but what could he say. Undoubtedly she wished to be undisturbed by such crude, stupid consolation as he might contrive. He descended slowly and went to bed. But he could not sleep. He lay tossing, it seemed for

hours. What, after all, did love of women, relations with women, ever bring but regret; swift, passionate, heart-swelling joy for the moment, even for days or years, but in the end weariness, sorrow, pangs of tragedy, irreparable, regretful remorse?

In the stillness of the night he could hear the shrill twitter of the cicadas in the garden, and faintly, softly, the sobbing, interminable, unconsolable, of Jun-san.



## CHAPTER IX

It was a dull season for news. From San Francisco they had cabled him to "hold down." A nationwide strike in America and one of these futile European reparations conferences were filling the papers at home, leaving scant space for Oriental matters. Anyway, nothing was happening. His idleness irked him. Everything seemed to have slipped into a dull, wearisome routine. He rebelled at it — anything for a bit of excitement of some kind, any kind. The thought came to him, kept recurring insistently, that now was time to look about a little, to experiment with Karsten's advice. After all, why not? Was he not missing something, an interesting and pleasing phase of life in the Orient, one that they all unanimously described as delectable, from Pierre Loti on. Even the warning contained in the episode between Karsten and Jun-san was losing its significance. At home matters had slipped back into the old, daily routine, as if nothing had happened. Through the day she was always in the main house, watching with solicitous care to meet Karsten's wants, retiring only when he had retired, to her own house, the bower which Karsten had had built for her when their love was young. As he looked back at it, it seemed to him that probably the whole thing had been just a little melodramatic; they had been overwrought, excited. Karsten had always been super-sensitive, too nervously susceptible to his own emotions; the dramatic instinct, no doubt. And then Jun-san. Well, they were not all like her. These international adventures were often, generally indeed, colored by humor rather than by tragedy.

He recalled the predicament, a few weeks ago, of Carruthers, who had amused his group of friends with his agitated alarm at his grotesque predicament. A geisha had unexpectedly, much to his pleased surprise, sent a note to him. She had summoned him, and he had answered, quickly enough, in a spirit of curiosity. Later it had developed that she thought he looked like Douglas Fairbanks, her favorite motion-picture hero. Prosaic Carruthers, solemnly horse-faced, the practical machinery salesman from Pittsburgh — they had all been highly amused at the absurdity. The later developments had given them still more and even greater delight.

Carruthers had taken a house in one of the suburbs in preparation for the arrival of his wife and drove of children. But he had thought that he might as well make use of the opportunity, his last fling of freedom. So he had invited her there, and she had come, and she had stayed, and when the wife was due in but a few days, she had still stayed, had refused to leave. Carruthers had been frantic. It had delighted them. Five days more — and she held the fort. Three days only. He had rushed from one to the other to help him out, give him advice, take the girl away, steal her from him, anything. "For God's sake, fellows, this is no joke. Take her off my hands, somebody." It had tickled them. "But how, Carruthers? Be sensible. We don't look like Douglas Fairbanks." It had been entrancingly amusing. Despairingly he had given the details. "The day after to-morrow, and she won't get out. I've told her my wife is coming, my *wife*. And she says she loves me. She don't care. If my wife comes, she will stay as my *mekake*, my concubine. Imagine me introducing: Mrs. Carruthers, my concubine — just like that! No, by Cæsar, it's gone beyond a joke. You've got to help me out." By Jove, it had

been a scream, till the very last. But on the last day of grace they had rid him of the lady. It had not been so easy, either. It had taken all the powers of the accomplished Nishimura to move her. He was useful, as he claimed. And Carruthers had had to pay her geisha license for a month. He looked upon it as a joke now; rather enjoyed telling the story. And the girl, she had taken no hurt, either. Nishimura said that she had spread the glad tidings all over Shimbashi. There was only fun, amusement, in an episode like that, at least if one were single, and then a little excitement. Life was becoming unbearably humdrum.

He was gradually becoming better acquainted with his geisha neighbor. Toshi-san she said her name was, and he was introduced to the duenna, her "mother" she called her, and to her maid, and to her doll, Mitsuko-san. In the morning, at about ten o'clock, when she opened the *shoji* to look at the weather, they often chatted. She was a pretty, vivacious little thing, wholly adorable, and they knew how to look after themselves, these geisha. So why not?

Sometimes, in the afternoon, before she began her caterwauling samisen practice, she would play for him a few phonograph pieces, "Rigoletto," the Dvořák "Humoresque," the things which it seemed all Tokyo was fond of. He did not understand much about music, still it seemed to him a pity if this country, these people, who had until now acquired fair taste through the fortunate absence of trashy, ephemeral rubbish, should now fall victims to the various "Blues" and "Bells" of fox-trot repertoires.

She evidently enjoyed the music; that was not pose. Her face beamed when she would announce the acquisition of a new record. "I have got 'Ave Malia.' It goes like that." She tried a high note, amusingly dissonant, in her typical geisha falsetto. "You should

see my phonograph. It is high, like that," she held her hand to the height of her bosom.

It seemed a chance. "All right, let me see it. I'd like to. When?"

But she was horrified. No, certainly not. Of course, he could not come to her house. The obstacle made him obstinate.

"All right, then. I'll go to the waiting-house over there and send for you. Then you'll have to come, won't you?"

"Yes, maybe; but if I come I'll bring my Mother." She pointed her tongue at him, just an infinitesimal tip, pink between white teeth, laughed, and was gone.

It seemed absurd. The girl was a geisha; it was her business to entertain guests, dance and sing for them at least, even if she apparently must reserve the favors of affection for that police commissioner, whose presence one sensed, obscure in the background, through the phonograph, the ever multiplying new records, new jewelry, all evidently offerings from him.

"I don't quite get it all. Surely she doesn't drag that stage property mother of hers about wherever she has guests. Can you explain?" he asked Karsten.

"Well, first of all, of course, you can't visit a geisha in her own house; at least, old man, it is not etiquette, it isn't done. You must meet them in the waiting-houses. If they didn't the waiting-houses would lose their commissions and would boycott the geisha. And the geisha guild would cause trouble. It is with that as with everything else in Japan, as in business where there must always be a half dozen middlemen between producer and consumer. Of course, you might take her on a picnic, if she consents, but I wouldn't, if I were you. Japan is changing. We are getting away from the days of Loti. Be discreet, anyway. And then it's expensive. You have to pay a tremendous fee

even for just the pleasure of helping her pick flowers, or sea shells, or whatever it might be, and she will have you buy a cartload of souvenirs for herself, and the mother, and the maid, and her friends, and the cat, for all I know. Anyway, remember the police commissioner. She would probably not dare."

So the matter did not progress. They chatted almost every day, across the alley, but she smiled at his invitations, enjoyed teasing him. It seemed an impasse.

He had stayed late at the Foreign Office, one afternoon, talking with young Kikuchi. They decided to dine together, but Kikuchi had an engagement and left early. Kent did not feel like going home. A gorgeously brilliant full moon, supernaturally large, was rising ponderously over the Shiba park trees. It brought out Tokyo to best advantage. In the shimmering half-light the crude modernisms, the telephone poles, wires, irritating newfangled architecture, receded faded away, and one might let the eye see only typical Japan, the opaquely lighted *shoji*, curved rooftrees. He had had a few cocktails, felt titillating with effervescent life, adventurous under the glamor of the moon, anticipatngly ready and eager for something out of the ordinary, some adventure. It might lurk anywhere, inside *shoji*, in dark gateways. He strolled through the geisha quarter, hoping that from some miniature garden, glimpsed through ornate gate, might stretch towards him white hands, might come some soft seductive voice. He knew that it was utterly unlikely, that, did he desire adventure, he must take the initiative. But he did not wish to do that. It would spoil just that element of chance, casual hazard of fortune, that was essential. He felt that somehow it was hovering close at hand, would come to-night, out of the silver-blue. His vagrant, erratic mood, the

moon, the whispering mystery of coyly self-effacing Tokyo, gave him an odd feeling as if the entire great city were a slyly demure courtesan, enigmatically but encouragingly smiling upon him.

But it seemed all to be a great, fantastic mockery. Desire, mood, setting, romantic, inviting adventure, were all there, but as he passed along, expectantly turning this corner, then the next, ever anticipatory, hopeful that now it would come — nothing came. The alleys were almost deserted. A geisha passed him, tripping along with evident set destination, followed by her little maid clasping long-necked silk-wrapped samisen, but she was answering the call of some one else, some male waiting on the *zabuton* somewhere. Fate was concerned with others, was busy elsewhere. His walk became disappointing, tedious. Now he was near his office. He had run out of tobacco. He went upstairs. It was the first time he had been there at night. His glance strayed across to Toshi-san's window. It was dark. Where might she be; entertaining some one, possibly that damned commissioner.

The moonlight was glorious. He remembered that Nishimura had said that the flat roof of the house was a fine place for *tsuki-mi*, viewing the moon, the favorite Japanese pastime which even the most prosaic seemed to appreciate. Why not take a look; the night was still young. He climbed up the narrow ladder-like staircase, pushed a sliding cover and climbed out on the roof. Loose planks had been placed to form a crude flooring. He squatted on them, and looked about, over the picturesque tiled roofs, the small platforms built on them for clothes drying and, more romantically, *tsuki-mi*.

On the platform just opposite something moved, took shape of a woman. He bent forward to see more closely.

"Good-evening, Kent-san. Do you like the moon view?"

It was Toshi-san, the adventure at last. He would not let it slip from him. She was entrancing in the moonlight, ethereal as some fantastic fairy-land picture. From where he sat the moon was almost directly behind her. An inspiration came to him and he moved a little, bringing the great, yellow orb directly in line behind her, so that her head was silhouetted against it, high helmet-like coiffure standing out black, sharply contoured, the glowing disk against her profile like a luminous halo — a preposterous image, a geisha with a halo. Surely this was a night of witchery!

The opportunity had come. He jumped to his feet, the loose boards rattling under him. It gave him an idea; he picked up one of them and placed it as a bridge over the space between the two platforms. She had risen also, stood looking over to him, hands grasping the low railing. What on earth was this mad foreigner about to do now?

He tested the plank with his foot. "O-Toshi-san. I am coming over to you."

"You mustn't. *Abunai*. Take care." But as she spoke she held out her hands towards him, to assist him, receive him. Romance at last. What would his prosaic San Francisco friends say, could they see him here, under the full moon, flitting about among the Tokyo housetops, into the arms of this flower-like Japanese girl, just a few feet away. He glanced down into the narrow chasm of the alley below, its darkness riven here and there by shafts of light from the windows. They would not know, these people down there, no one would know, of this secret meeting, his and O-Toshi-san's. This was the thing he had sought, unpremeditated, a casual stroke of good fortune; with the pleasant sense of venturing into the unknown.

It was easy. A step, and he had crossed, felt her arms about him solicitously, as she anxiously sought to drag him to safety. She indicated the *zabuton* on which she had been sitting, pale-green with a great crimson flower design. "Please, sit down."

"Oh, no, you must sit there. Ladies first; that's foreign style, you know."

She laughed delightedly. "Oh, how funny. I had heard that foreigners did like that to their women; but it is so queer, to have it happen to me, to oneself. Still, you must sit there. You are an *o-kyaku-san*, a guest, you know."

"*Chigaimasen*. It makes no difference." He forced her gently down on the cushions. "Anyway, I am not just a *kyaku-san*, just like the others down there. I have come to you out of the night, dropped from the moon."

She laughed again, that same clear silver tone; he sensed a musical enjoyment from it. "It is just like a cinema picture, isn't it, your coming to me, like that. I am glad it happened to me; you are so adventurous, you foreigners, so different. I know how you do, from the cinema, but I always wanted to know for myself. Yes, I am glad you are not just a guest."

"*Naze?* Why?"

"*Naze-demo*," the equivalent to the white woman's "because." "I won't tell you now; maybe some day, by-and-by," she smiled mischievously. "Now tell me about your women. I see them on the Ginza sometimes, big, strong, beautiful. Tell me, when you can have them, why do foreigners sometimes love us little, *kitanai* Japanese girls?"

That absurd "*kitanai*" again! It was so inapposite, irritated him. He hastened to explain, to refute, trying to seek the terms which he thought might best appeal to this slight, fairy-like dream-picture, whose



mode of thought, fashion of reasoning, was unknown, mysterious, to him. He felt his way, amused at the intricate, curious task.

"You know, a mountain is beautiful, but so is a flower. You may find your pleasure in the great, majestic beauty of Fuji-san, and then, again," he seized her hand, "you may delight in the flower, in this little hand, delicate, warm, soft," he smoothed the slender fingers, "embodying in its delightful smallness the entire sum of infinite perfection."

She let her hand lie in his. He drew her closer so her slim body rested lightly against his, and as he did it he wondered, why she was so passive, offering no resistance, not even making a show of doing so? Was it because it was all in her day's work, an easy surrender to careless handling, or mauling by clumsy, lustful paws of carousing guests? It took the glamor out of the thing, stripped the situation instantly of its air of light, ephemeral charm. How far did they go, these girls; at least, how far did this one go? He would soon find out. He threw both arms about her and drew her close into his clasp; but now she resisted, set both hands against his face. He was surprised at the strength of these slender arms. There could be no doubt of the genuineness of her resistance. She fought desperately to get away. He released her. She looked at him gravely, without anger, but just a bit disdainfully. "But you mustn't do that, behave just like a rough guest. I thought you were quiet. You must promise not to do that again. The hand, yes, and, if you promise, I will sit quite near you, yes; but no more."

He felt quite ashamed; still his curiosity had the better of him. Was that the usual procedure, the favors usually granted the guests? He asked her, bluntly.

"Oh, no." She placed her hand on his arm, looked up at him seriously, intently. "The hand, it doesn't matter. But I don't sit like that, so close, with others. You, you were a friend."

She seemed so ingenuous, the air of innocence was quaint, irresistible. He would have sworn that she told the truth—but what about the police commissioner? He felt that it was churlish, an unworthy thing; still he could not help asking: "But your police friend?"

She swept her hand outwards impatiently, as would she waft away something noxious, unpleasant. "So you've heard. But what of it. *Shikataganai*, it can't be helped. Why should you care; he has bought me, he gives me many fine things; but he is only an *o-kyaku-san*, after all—and you are a friend, so why should you care?"

She noted the surprise on his face, his amazement at this astonishing reasoning. "But don't you understand, one doesn't care for the man who is just a guest; it is a matter of business, but one doesn't love the *o-kyaku-san*, no matter what he gives, money, presents. The man who pays nothing, the friend, he's the one—the one whom one cares for. But, of course, you are a foreigner; you may know the hearts of your own women, but you don't know the hearts of geisha."

"No, how can I? Tell me. Teach me. Come over here again. I shall be very quiet."

"Then promise." She held her hand out to him, the little finger curved into a diminutive hook, took his hand and curved his finger in the same fashion, linked it into her own. "That's the way we promise. Now, don't forget."

She gave him her hand naïvely and snuggled close to him. "You have been very rough, but I know that

you don't know about Japanese custom. So now I shall tell you what to do to make the geisha like you. You know when you act as you did just now, we don't like you. You must be kind, gentle. We don't like rough men, or restless ones, and the ones who laugh loudly at everything, or the ones who are over-sweet on first acquaintance. And we don't like the ones who brag about themselves and about their money, or who throw it about to show off, or the ones who are too dandified, or who chatter too much. But we like the man who is quiet, not too silent, but who talks pleasantly, and who doesn't boast, and who doesn't brag about experience with geisha. If you want a geisha to like you, don't be stingy, but don't spend over-much. Be cheerful and be kind. That's why I like the foreigners in the cinema. And now I have taught you a lot, and you are very wise, and," she laughed up into his face, "next time you meet a geisha you know just how to win her."

He protested. He would use his knowledge only to win her; but she shook her head. No, it was impossible. And now it was late. She must go. She rose, bowed ceremoniously. He grasped her hand. Just a moment; would she not meet him again? She could not tell; yes, she often came up here for *tsuki-mi*. She bowed again and disappeared down the stairway into the house.

After that he met her often, on the roof. As they became intimate, she told him that she would come whenever she was not engaged; but she was popular and he was often disappointed. It added to the fascination of the meetings, the constant uncertainty, enhanced the pleasure of being with her, listening to her grave, childish wisdom. He felt that he might easily come to care for her, that she was insinuating herself into his affection; that she might become the woman

whom he was awaiting to come from somewhere, into his life. But while their friendship grew, and she talked more freely, confidently, and he felt himself gaining an intimate insight into this quaint, delicate little geisha soul, she maintained punctiliously the barrier of the first evening. Carefully, with the most subtle caution, he endeavored to gain a little more, to draw her closer, but she was ever alert, baffled him quietly.

Usually their talk was gay, and especially when her intuition, marvelously accurate, warned her of his restlessness, she held it so. But one evening when the night was dark, with only a few faint stars futilely scattered in the murk, he fancied that she was troubled. He could not see her face, but as he sat near her he could notice her bosom heave uneasily and sensed a trembling, nervous tension of her body. But she would tell him nothing; said little, pressed close to him, silently oppressed by her thoughts. What could be going on in that childishly troubled little geisha mind, behind that clear white forehead with its finely curved half-moon brows? He placed both arms about her cautiously, but she did not resist. The poor, dear, little girl! He wanted to hold her, help her, felt the instinct of protection, affection. "O-Toshi-san, tell me what it is. I shall help you. Can't you trust me a little, dearest? Can't you care for me a little?"

She straightened in his arms, drew her head back, black eyes gazing deeply into his. Then, suddenly, she threw both arms about him, clung to him convulsively, gaspingly, pressing her soft cheek against his. He moved a little so he faced her. "Kiss me, O-Toshi-san." She drew back her head a little, startled. "Kiss me, in the foreign way. You are a foreigner's, now." He bent over to her, pressed his lips against her soft mouth. But it was only a faint response. "I must

teach you to kiss, dear. Come." Again he kissed her, again and again, and gradually she responded, hot lips clung to his, as she trembled, clinging in his arms.

"I left behind a flower yet in bud; it weighs on my mind that it may blow without me."

A drunken guest was reeling from a waiting-house down the alley. She drew herself away. "It is late. I must go." She raised herself on her toes, framed his face between her hands, kissed him. "Good-by, Kent-san. Good-by."

She was gone.

So it had come at last. The woman had come into his life. A geisha. Now what would follow? What would be the arrangements? Could he take her from the geisha house? Where? The thought of the *o-kyaku-san* became suddenly intolerable. But just how should he proceed? Confound his ignorance about such matters. He would ask Karsten for advice, but first he wanted to see her again, to ask her what she wished to do. Probably he would see her in her window, in the morning. Anyway, he did not wish to reason, to fetter his thoughts with commonplace details. That could be done later. His mind reverted to the events of the hours just past, the amazingly unexpected good fortune, delight, which had come to him like a shooting star out of the dark. He let the images of recollection surge over him, envelop him. Thank God, life would have some meaning, some of the high light of love venture to brighten the dimness of dull routine existence.

He barely noticed, as he entered the office building the next morning, a couple of hand-carts, piled high with boxes and bundles, moving from the alley. He ran up the stairs, glanced through the window. The *shoji* were open, but there was no sign of her. He seated himself at his desk to wait, noticed an envelope,

a quaint flower-embossed thing, and opened it curiously. The missive was from Toshi-san, written in *kata-kana*, the easy phonetic script which she knew he understood.

*Tame wo omoute  
Hara tate sosete  
Muri ni kayeshita  
Atode naku.*

Thinking only of his good,  
I made him angry, sent him back  
Against our mutual wish,  
And then I wept.

Made him angry? What? The thought flashed on him, monstrously appalling. He called Ishii. Had the people opposite moved? Yes, they had left early that morning. Should he find out where? After a while he came back. Yes, O-Toshi-san had gone away, no one would tell him where.

So the adventure had ended, suddenly, as it had begun. Why? What had been her reason? Probably he would never know. The mysterious Orient, yes, like an Arabian Nights tale, where the fairy vanished into vapor at the profaning touch of importunate hands.

## CHAPTER X

Karsten could give him no help. "Better make up your mind that you have lost her. She has evidently been taken away to some other geisha quarter, Yotsuya, Ushigomo, Akasaka, probably Akasaka. They must have smelt a rat, the geisha master, or the guild. They don't want you to find her, and the police commissioner's being mixed up in it complicates the affair, makes it harder. Anyway, you are the gainer, you have had the experience. Now you know these girls' insidious — charm. The word is threadbare, but it is the only one that describes it. And then you have the memory.

"So make up your mind that she is gone. Presently there will be others; and you will add to your collection of memories." He smiled. "I don't know if it has ever struck you that as we plod along in life, with a few bright spots, vivid pleasures, illuminating the general dullness of existence, the only treasures really worth while that we gather are the memories thereof. You know, as I grow older, I find that they become valuable; they gain with age like wine. One picks them up and reviews them, as one might old pressed flowers, faded ribbons, the stupid material mementos. But the ones really worth while are those which one has stored in one's mind; they don't fade, they never lose their fragrance. And, do you know, I find that the ones which I treasure, the ones that come back pleasurably into my thoughts again and again, are not the recollections of such few good things, or wise things as I have done — they seem drab, without color,

or tone, or life. No, it's the memories of the foolish things that I have done, madcap adventures, turbulent love affairs, — these are the things that I find pleasure in recalling. You have noticed those old fellows whose active life is behind them, who sit in the sunshine and smoke, and think, and dream. The daydreams of youth are all in future; but the old men have no future. Their dreams are of the past. And it has occurred to me that I know what they are dreaming of, as they sit there so quietly and smile over their pipes, and it is not the clever things that they did, the big deals they pulled off; no, it is the foolish pranks of youth, the fiery, passionate adventures of young manhood, — these are the thoughts which bring back youth to them, because they are characteristic of it, as those others are not — these are what enable them to become young again in their dreams, as they drowse, recalling this affair and that; this tryst by a pool under a hot summer moon; this girl; that fight, one after one, as one would tell off beads on a rosary.

“Even in my most frivolous days I used to have that idea, that however foolish it all might seem, I was at least gaining memories for my old age. Life becomes like diving after pearls in the opal, translucent depths of the sea, which are strung one after the other; all may have a general resemblance, color, luster, contour, but essentially each is a little different from the others; each has its individual history. At least, I have made that provision against my old age; I have a number of memories to recall, to tell off on my rosary of experiences. Can you think of anything so horrible as barren old age, the utter poverty of the old man who has none of the recollections which may bring back youth to him?” He laughed a little at his own earnestness. “’Tis a pet theory of mine. You may think it a mad fancy, but possibly you may see some-



thing in it, and if you do, well — go forth and collect your pearls while yet you may."

A bizarre idea; just like Karsten. But it carried no great appeal to Kent. He had no heart to seek love deliberately, even lighter love must come unsought. He would have enjoyed the company of some of the girls whom he knew, but the Suzukis had gone to their villa in Oiso for the summer, and he had not seen Kimiko-san since that night in the tea house. She had joined a traveling theatrical company and was touring the "colonies," Korea, Manchuria, Formosa.

He formed the habit of taking long walks in the evening, enjoying such scant relief as one might obtain after the sweltering heat of the day. These rambles took him all over the city and he found vague interest in book stores, curio shops, odd little drinking places; in talking with chance-met Japanese, clerks, barmaids, students, feeling that in an indefinite, tentative way he might get a glimpse of the seething, vaguely stirring thoughts of this multitude, gropingly, eagerly seeking the ideas of the new, great world all around them, the uncertainly fumbling mass mind in flux of transition.

He had dropped into one of the myriad small beer "halls," with their pathetic attempts at modernity, which were springing up all over Tokyo. They were generally much of a pattern, a few tables and chairs, foreign style, cheap, slatternly maids making their attempt at new fashion by means of dirty aprons tied over cotton kimonos. It was in Kanda, the student quarter. Gangling youths, many of them bespectacled, in kimono or university uniform, but nearly all with the brass-embled cap, came and went, drank their beer, munched the food prepared in what was supposed to be foreign fashion, joked with the waitresses. He noticed that many went upstairs. Idly curious, he thought he would go up there, but a waitress stopped

him. He remonstrated; the others could go. No, she was indefinite in her explanation, but determined. Well, no matter. He dismissed it from his mind.

Suddenly some one stood before him, bowing deeply. It was Ishii, his clerk.

"Good evening, Mr. Kent." He was evidently pleased to show the others that he knew this foreign gentleman. Kent invited him to sit down. As they chatted over their beer, he told him of his rebuff. What was the reason?

"Well, you see, it is, in a way, a sort of a private place, kind of a club." He was oddly evasive, ill at ease. "Just wait a moment, please."

He scrambled upstairs and disappeared. Presently he returned. "You can come, if you like. They are my friends upstairs there. We meet here sometimes. You know," he lowered his voice, "it's politics."

So that was it. Immediately Kent was eager to go. These were the hotbeds of the new thought, the "dangerous thoughts," as the police called them, half-baked Socialism, Communism, Sovietism, fortuitously mixed with Cubist art, literature after the fashion of Dostoevsky, crude passion for mass sculpture à la Rodin, anything that was thought to be ultra-modern or outré, beyond the minds of the *hoi polloi*, *haikara*, the latest in modern culture. It was an opportunity to learn for himself what they really thought, these youths, how much of it was real, and how much only pose; to see how deeply it all went, whether it was merely the usual ebullience of youth, such as one might see in the European universities, even in America, which usually spent itself quite safely with passage into maturer years, or whether this was really more definite, more likely to have direct, positive influence on the life of the nation, the development of the government of Japan.

They were extremely courteous, quite friendly,

though a little self-conscious, ill at ease, evidently diffident as to whether they had been wise in admitting this stranger. He was invited to sit at the table with two men older than the others; he was told that they were professors. Scattered at other tables were some ten or twelve students, much of a type, the ungainly age of adolescence. It was awkward in the beginning. He had the uncomfortable feeling that they were taking his measure, deciding whether he was quite safe. He would like to reassure them; still, it was probably better to let the situation develop spontaneously, to let them take the initiative. He drank with the two professors; he judged them to be about thirty-five or forty, thin, nervous men with the pale, somewhat ascetic faces of enthusiasts. They opened with the questions usual in Japan; what was his nationality, how long had he been in Japan?

"What are you politically?"

After that came a long conglomeration of political questions, first tentative hints, designed to draw out his ideas, to determine his stand, but soon they launched into their pet topic, the miseries of the present situation in Japan.

"But surely you must see that, even if there are things to correct in other countries, in no place are conditions so terrible as they are in Japan." The elder professor had risen, swept out his hand, addressing not only Kent but the whole assembly, the students who sat gazing at him raptly. "There are only a few hundred thousands in the privileged class. They are the ones who are gaining everything. They took advantage of the fact that the people, the sixty millions, are still thinking as they did in the days of the Tokugawa, looking to their masters for orders, taking dumbly whatever they might deign to fling to them. They have been exploiting the people, and they and the

militarists want to exploit the other people, too, in Siberia and China. You foreigners are always talking about the militarist rule of Japan; but you don't see that even the militarists are not all-powerful now. The real governing power of Japan is the little multi-millionaire class, the Watanabes, the Fukusakis, the Oharas, the Inouyes, the Yamanakas, the Katos, only about half a dozen enormously wealthy houses, with their mines, and their steamship companies, their tremendous business houses, their banks, who buy Diet members and cabinet ministers, who determine the Government's policy, who keep prices high by insisting on import tariffs, who wallow in concessions. Even the militarists bow to them. The plutocrats wanted Siberia, so we spent hundreds of millions of yen on the Siberia expedition and our young men were killed by the thousands that the plutocrats might get fisheries, and mines and oil wells. Japan to-day is a plutocratic oligarchy, with the militarists as a handy and subservient tool, with the police throwing into jail any one who tries to wake up the people to assert their rights. Just look about you. See, right here in Tokyo, the poor are huddled by thousands in hovels in Fukagawa and Honjo, where the river washes out their houses every year, and still they must pay heavy taxes on their miserable mud flats, while the rich with their parks, stretching over vast spaces in the best and highest parts of the city, pay taxes only on a valuation as forest lands or fields. These are the ones who want the people to remain as they were a hundred years ago, feudal slaves, in order that the rich may grow richer. That's why the police keep watch over us and the government officials hire *soshi*, professional ruffians, to break up our meetings. That's why it is a crime to 'harbor dangerous thoughts.' Property is the curse of all modern countries. When private property be-

came known the class struggle began the world over; and nowhere is property as privileged as it is in Japan. Labor should be the measure of value, undifferentiated human labor, where all workers should be paid alike, no matter what might be the manner of their work. Here capital exploits labor, as capital always does, and only by abolition of capitalism can we abolish such exploitation."

The professor flung back a long wisp of wet hair, paused to refresh himself from his beer glass. The students were all nodding approval. Evidently this was familiar doctrine to which they heartily subscribed. Kent remembered the numberless volumes of Karl Marx which might be seen in every second-hand book stall in the student quarter, along Jimbo-cho. They swallowed it all, the Marxian dogmas, cramming them down hastily in their hungry voracity for new thought, ever more.

Ishii-san insisted on seeing Kent part of the way home, after another long harangue on capitalism, evidently a popular topic. As they left the place, a shadow detached itself from the general blackness of the buildings opposite and followed at a little distance. "A detective," whispered Ishii, excitedly. "He is following us. Oh, Mr. Kent, I wish I might be arrested."

When they parted, Kent was relieved to see that the shadow followed Ishii. He had no desire to become a victim to the burdensome attentions of the police. Probably he had been foolish to venture into this queer gathering. Still, it had been interesting, had given him another glimpse into the intimate life of Japan, far more vitally important than the phase which had heretofore intrigued him.

"What do you make of it?" he asked Kittrick a few days later. "It is up to us to know all this that's going on all about us. It's widespread. It's important.

It has a vital bearing on the future of Japan, and still it's so intangible, so oddly impossible to get at. Is it just an intermittent phase, or is it a growing movement that will slowly but surely result in fruit of some kind, — revolution or what?"

"Of course, I've been wanting to follow it, just as you have," said Kittrick. "But what can one do? If you try to learn from the agitators, no matter how innocent may be your intentions, the police will soon make it impossible for you. One may get a little by following the Japanese papers, watching the straws that show which way the wind blows. Here you see a big appropriation for special officers to watch over 'dangerous thoughts'; here's an item about a 'special force to guard the persons of cabinet ministers."

"The point is that Japan is discarding her old beliefs, political, social, ethical, religious, the whole business, and she is in a breathless hurry to grab at anything, any kind of belief, or philosophy, or political creed that comes handy. Of course it's a mix-up. The political unrest may be dangerous in so far as it leads excited fanatics to take too literally what they read or hear, so they prize a knife or a bomb and sally forth to become heroes or martyrs, but there is no great amount of sound sense or definite program in it."

"When the people stand up and shout for this thing or the other, you'll find that the real underlying cause is entirely economic. A few years ago Japan's industrial system was patriarchal. The boss had a little shop with half a dozen or a dozen workmen. He fed them, and clothed them and looked after them, *pater-familias* fashion, did their thinking for them, and they were quite satisfied. That was all they knew. Now has come the big factory system, where thousands work in great plants and never see the owner. The personal relation has been lost. Then they've heard

that workmen in other countries have better conditions. During the war, when workers must be had at any price to fill the orders from abroad that swamped the factories, they learned to strike for high pay — and got it. They've learned a lot of other things, 'sabotage,' 'go slow,' unionism, that labor may have a voice in factory control, all that sort of thing. They see the rich grow richer, and are learning that they ought to have a share of those profits. Most of them think that Russia is a little paradise for the workmen. It's not the political side that interests them, it's better conditions. They have learned to look upon capitalism collectively and on labor collectively. Their unions are becoming more and more consolidated. The next thing you'll see nation-wide strikes.

"And in the meantime the economic situation grows worse every day. Japan has lost her foreign markets, so she closes factories. The capitalists insist on dividends, so, as they can't make money abroad, they insist on keeping prices high on home products by keeping production just a bit lower than the demand. That means closing more factories, discharging more workmen, unemployment. If they kick too much, they give them discharge allowances, six months' pay, a year's pay, anything to avoid a row — and, of course, the consumer pays for it, and prices go higher, while the workmen retire to the country villages they came from and blow their allowances and then live on their relatives. The family system of helping relatives is saving the situation to-day. That's why you don't hear much trouble yet from unemployment, but as the number increases of idlers whom each worker must support, the condition grows worse. The end must come some day."

## CHAPTER XI

The situation grew on Kent's nerves. Every morning when he looked out from his window, he half expected to see red flags in the streets, to hear the turmoil of mobs. It was absurd, he told himself. There were sure to be warnings, minor tumults, evidences of strained unrest. Still, he felt that he must spare no time in getting inside the facts as soon as possible, to come to see every side of the comprehensive picture.

It would be a good idea to become acquainted with the capitalistic side of the story. He began a round of calls on the money kings, captains of industry, the owners of names which recurred constantly in the news of economic events. For days he wandered about in the lairs of plutocracy, sent his card in to dozens of men, wasted hours in bleak waiting rooms with their scant furnishing of variegated chairs and tables, dusty curtains and innumerable ash trays, smoked idly while hundreds of clerks ran about, like bees in huge hives, or sat smoking and drinking tea. But the great men were always out of the city, or sick, or attending funerals of relatives. There was courtesy everywhere. Would he not see such and such a secretary or third vice-president instead? When he insisted, they shook their heads, a bit surprised at the effrontery of this stranger who thought that he might thus easily gain speech with the great ones. They were amusingly absurd, these foreigners, seemed to be their thought. It was as if he had marched into Buckingham Palace and demanded an interview with King George. He



knew that he could probably make his way into even these hallowed sanctums, should he obtain letters of introduction from the Foreign Office, which was always most obliging in such matters. He knew that letters of introduction held an exaggerated value, were regarded as almost indispensable by the Japanese themselves. But they aroused his resentment, these haughty, purse-proud plutocrats. Evidently talking to the press was the last thing they desired. Well, let them go to blazes then; if they did not want him to have their side of the story. He'd get it elsewhere.

But Kent's peregrinations into the labyrinth of Japanese economics were interrupted by a letter from Hopkinson, his editor, brought by hand by a tourist friend who happened to pass through Japan. Kent was glad to be certain that it had not passed through the uncertainties of the Japanese post office or the more insidious danger of the ever prying unseen hands.

"I want you to see what information you can get with respect to Japan's submarine plans," wrote Hopkinson. "Of course, the old exaggerated feeling of distrust against Japan in America has, since the Conference, been replaced by a possibly just as exaggerated feeling of confidence in her will to disarm. You will get what I am driving at by reading the Bywater article which I enclose, particularly the part where he says about Japan: 'With the possible exception of France, she is the only signatory which has laid the keels of new cruisers, destroyers and submarines since the limitation program was negotiated, and she is the only one who is now at work on a large program of these vessels. — The Japanese submarine flotilla is very much stronger both in numbers and individual power than is generally known, and no other navy in the world is building so many sea-going boats. — During the past three years no coastal submarines have been

built in Japan, every boat being laid down within that period having been designed for long-range cruising.' Take this in connection with the speech of the Japanese War Minister, which you recently sent us, in which he declares that 'if a nation has large wealth, small standing armaments will suffice, for such a nation will be able to expand fully its armaments in case of emergency. On the contrary, a poor nation is necessarily compelled to develop its armaments gradually, for it would be unable to expand them rapidly.'

"We don't want sensational stuff, as you know, for we intend to carry on our policy of fostering friendship as long as possible, but we want you to get as much dope as you can, if for nothing else, at least for our own guidance and future reference ——"

Damn it! Just as he was getting well started with the economic matter, he would have to devote his main energies to this distasteful task. He liked the Japanese and took far more pleasure in his stories which were to Japan's credit than in those which were not. However, there was some satisfaction in knowing that the *Chronicle* would pursue its usual conservative policy. As he thought the matter over, he became more interested. Of course, the situation should be covered. Heretofore he had followed it only in a general way, but had been inclined to overlook its importance because of his interest in the economic and social unrest.

"It's going to be the devil's own job," he said to Karsten, as they were smoking their pipes after dinner. "If there's one thing the Japanese keep quiet about, it's their submarines; and, of course, nothing in the Conference agreement prevents them from building as many as they like. And, besides, they are the obvious weapon of defense against America. Japan has an ideal situation with a long barrier of islands running from Saghalien as far as the Equator, if you include

the Mandate Islands. Yes, I know that under the Mandate terms, she can't fortify them, but the Germans showed that any little place with a few barrels of oil on it can make a submarine base. They can place the oil there in a jiffy, if they expect trouble. Maybe it is already there; oil can be used for lots of things besides war. There's nothing to prevent it. With a chain of island supply stations and a great fleet of submarines Japan can put up a wonderful defense and commerce destruction. That's all self-evident. The job is going to be to find out what they are doing in that line and what they intend to do. It's a regular Oppenheim job. What do you think of it?"

"You know I don't take much interest in that sort of thing," Karsten rubbed his chin thoughtfully, stood up and began pacing the floor. "Still, of course, one hears a lot of talk, and I think that most foreigners here have about the same idea on the matter. The submarine is Japan's natural weapon to-day. A few years ago, before America entered the war, Japan thought she could lick the United States and her strategy was based on offensive lines. When she found to her bitter disappointment that America really could fight, she began to revise her opinion, and when America's program of bigger fortifications in Hawaii and elsewhere was brewing, she felt that she had no choice but to continue feverishly with the Eight-and-Eight battle fleet program which she had originated when the idea was to lick America. But she could never have kept it up. She couldn't have afforded it. Of course, the militarists are professionals who don't care about anything but the army and navy. They would have insisted, even if the country had been bled white. But even then, even if she had managed to build the fleet, she couldn't have kept it up. Her war savings are decreasing at an alarming rate, her

national wealth, commerce, industry, the whole thing is decreasing. The Washington Conference was the biggest bit of luck that ever happened to Japan. It enabled her to save her face, and to make a big play to gain international confidence — which I'm glad she got — and at the same time to save her from the necessity of building a vast fleet of battleships, which she couldn't afford, and do it with the assurance that America wouldn't outstrip her in a naval race either.

“So as Japan had, reluctantly, made up her mind that she must change to a defensive strategy anyway, she is just as well off with a fleet of submarines, which won't cost her nearly so much. Then, when I said that the submarine was Japan's natural weapon, I meant it in a psychological sense also. Remember, it has always been Japan's cue to watch wars and take lessons from them. Nothing probably impressed her quite so much as the fact that Germany almost beat England, in spite of her great battleships, with her *unterseebooten*. The general horror of the 'frightfulness' involved never touched Japan. She simply couldn't see the idea. It was virtually successful — would have been entirely so had Germany had the advantages that Japan has — and, personally, I don't believe that the militarists have one ethic to rub on another, so to speak. They'd cheerfully adopt German frightfulness, with such improvements as they might devise, and never even be able to see that it was morally wrong, so long as they thought that it would work and that they could get away with it. You know that the German methods never aroused the slightest feeling of disgust or horror in the people of Japan. They honestly wondered what the devil we were making such a fuss about. The militarists saw, sadly, that the German war machine, which they had used as a model, went to smash, that they'd have to remodel. There was never, with the

whole people, any enmity against Germany. At one time, during the spring of 1917 I think it was, when some British ship had stopped a Japanese boat to search for Germans, the feeling against England was far stronger than it ever was against Germany. At the time of the Paris Conference, when the rest of the world was yelling to hang the Kaiser, his picture, mustaches, eagle helmet and all, was offered for sale in windows not a block from Hibiya — though at reduced prices, it's fair to add. That's why I say that the submarine is Japan's natural weapon. It suits her geographically, financially and ethically. Go to it, old man, there's a story there, all right — but I don't think you'll get it."

## CHAPTER XII

The more he thought it over, the more the new assignment appealed to Kent. It required close thinking. He must move with the utmost caution lest suspicion be aroused which would close up every source of information instantly. He did not know just where to begin. He must proceed very indirectly. The difficulty began to fascinate him.

Finally he made up his mind that he might as well begin with old Viscount Kikuchi, the father of young Kikuchi of the Foreign Office, member of the Privy Council, whom he had met through the son and whom he called on occasionally. The name of the Viscount appeared only seldom in the papers, but he was considered by those in the know to be the most brilliant mind in the council, the best informed in respect to international politics; some even insisted that he was the actual director of Japan's foreign policy. Kent had a great liking for him, a gentleman of the old school, who with his marvelously diversified information with regard to the most intricate ramifications of politics of Europe, America and Asia, wide reading in several languages, still chose to preserve the manner and appearance, the admirable traditions of vanishing Japan. His finely chiseled features and long, white beard inspired a feeling of respect, almost reverence, lent him the aspect of a Confucian sage of the old Chinese prints, heightened by the toga-like simplicity of his black silk kimono, unornamented save for the *go mon*, the family crest, a white circle with a conventional heraldic device, white on the field of black

on the back below the neck and on the sleeves. He valued the Viscount highly as a source of information and had often been pleasantly surprised at the frankness with which he gave out facts which Kent had not thought it possible to gain, disdaining the secrecy about petty matters so dear to the lesser minds of Japanese officialdom.

Kent had not called for almost a month. It was quite natural to do so now. The Viscount occupied a vast room on the third floor of an office building near Hibiya, an odd rookery housing half a dozen of the euphoniously named societies which have sprung up like mushrooms, in Japan, and which serve no apparent purpose except that of furnishing presidencies and vice-presidencies in legion to numerous honorable gentlemen. As he climbed upward he passed the doors of the Society for Inculcation of Spiritual Influences Among Workmen, the Foreign Policy Debating Club, the Bolivian-Japanese Friendship Society, with their drowsy office boys and idle secretaries smoking over *hibachi*, — a queer collection of vapid purposelessness serving as a foil for the activities of the busy brain up above.

But as Kent climbed up the stairway, he was thinking of the coming interview, how he would lead off with the economic situation, stressing the decline of Japan's finances and industries. Gradually he would creep over to the taxation question, try to bring in the disappointing lack of tax reduction in spite of the fact that armaments were being reduced; possibly he might even venture to refer to Bywater, if it seemed propitious and natural — it would depend on how things developed. He would have to —

Suddenly, as if blotted out by a flash of blinding light, the whole train of thoughts vanished, was obliterated completely. He found himself staring at

a face looking down at him from the landing above that smote his senses, dumbfounded them with an overwhelming realization of having been instantaneously, unexpectedly, brought face to face with the essence of beauty, flawless, sublime, irradiating its splendor towards him, as he advanced slowly, hesitatingly, upwards. In the few moments which it took to mount the half dozen steps a whirl of thoughts raced through his brain, each one clear-cut enough, like the rapid succession of minute individual pictures of a cinema film, yet all melting into one another, unifying into the one idea that here was the marvel, a revelation — and yet it was not the instantaneous flash of love, the *coup de foudre*, desire of fulfillment of desire, possession; but rather the marvelous rapt wonder and delight at magnificent, brilliant beauty, impersonal almost, as one may be struck with ecstasy at the unexpected revealment of a splendid landscape glimpsed suddenly through a rift in fog. In the half-light he was aware mainly of the eyes, deep, dark, lustrously brilliant against her pale face, framed by a cloud of black hair. It was as if he were advancing into their luster, as if it suffused him.

As he stood in front of the table where she sat facing the stairs, he felt breathless, confused at the necessity for drab, commonplace action. He bowed ceremoniously, fished for his card case, conscious of the wonder in her eyes, pleased at her smile, irritated with the sense that he must be appearing like a fool, and still sensing delighted gratification in the feeling of her presence.

Was the Viscount in? Yes. She took his card, flitted behind a screen which separated her place from the main part of the great room. Yes, the Viscount would see him. He noted the whiteness of her teeth as she smiled. As he found a seat facing the Viscount,



he discovered with joy that he was able to look past the corner of the screen at the profile of the girl as she sat at her post facing the stairway.

He tried to pull his thoughts together for the interview. Hang it, it would be hard to think connectedly; the nicely arranged logic of his questions had flown from him. He experienced intense relief when he heard, as if from a distance, the words of the Viscount — he was extremely sorry; he was glad to see him, but it happened that he had an important engagement. He must leave in just a few minutes. Would not Kent come again soon, at almost any time. He should be glad to give him all the time he might wish.

What luck! Kent was glad at the heaven-sent granting of grace; he only hated the necessity of leaving, of tearing himself away from this place where he might sit and look at that girl, this revelation of beauty which had come upon him by the wondrously kind offices of fate.

He shook hands with the Viscount. Safely behind the screen, as he passed the girl, he bowed to her, with the ceremony as if she were a great lady of the aristocracy, emphasized it, wishing to convey to her, in some way, some indication of his desire to pay tribute to that inexpressible perfection. As he made the turn of the stairway he glanced back up at her. She was looking at him and smiled again. He thought he detected a glint of something in her eyes, understanding, gratification, something, anyway, which he might construe into the slightest possible spark of a beginning of acquaintance.

He crossed through Hibiya Park and found a bench where he might sit and get order into the confusion of his impressions. Love at first sight? No, that was not it; there was no feeling of covetousness, of passionate desire to win, conquer, possess; rather an over-

whelming longing to be in her presence, to sense that feeling of being pleurably suffused by the irradiation of pure, sheer beauty, as one might bask in warm, brilliant sunshine. It was an odd, undefinable sensation, defying logic or analysis. But why bother? He was wholly overcome with the impression that great good fortune had come upon him. He wanted to be near her, that was all. There was nothing to ponder over except the means as to how he might contrive that.

Of course, he would have a chance to see her when he called on the Viscount. He would call soon, to-morrow — no, that would be Friday, the day for meeting of the Privy Council, and the Viscount would not be at his office — would not be at his office — In a flash the inspiration came to him: why, that is just the time you must call, you fool; you'll have a chance to see her, to talk to her alone, to gain a little headway in acquaintance.

Through the day the thought kept recurring constantly, insistingly. To-morrow. It interfered with other thoughts. Well, let them go. He would think of her. But what did he want, anyway; what would it lead to? He knew distinctly that he was not seeking a flirtation, a love affair. She had not impressed him that way at all. Could one then not be on terms of just friendship with a girl, enjoying her beauty as one would that of a picture, a gorgeous temple, or a fine, rich brocade, only that? Still, the idea kept clamoring, if they became friends, intimate friends, would not, inevitably, time come when he would want to hold her hand, gather her, the whole glorious sum of her beauty, in his arms. He tried to push the thought away. That was not what he wanted. It was the idea of the delicacy, the purity of relation which fascinated him; to hold her tenderly, as one might a frail, fragile

flower, a dainty, vivid butterfly, untouched, untainted by touch of physical possession. Something, cynically suggestive, insisting in crowding up from the depth of his mind, irritated him, like a mocking face grinning at him insinuatingly. Hang it all! He must know her, that was all there was to it. He would see her in the morning.

The following day, as he looked forward to the time when he might go to her, new, disturbing thoughts kept cropping up. It seemed so foolish, this suddenly being smitten by what had seemed to him an apparition of perfection of beauty. Such could not appear, did not appear in the persons of typists in Tokyo office buildings. The Japanese term "*nido-bikuri*" shot into his mind, the laconically descriptive slang phrase, literally "twice surprised," referring to the delighted wonder of first sight of what appears to be perfection of beauty — the first surprise — which is dissipated by the second closer sight thereof, shattering the illusion — the second surprise. Probably he would find that she was, after all, but a pretty little typist, dainty, attractive and all that, but no more; that sober reality would cause this iridescent bubble of fancy to dissolve instantaneously into its plain component suds on which he might but stare in foolish disillusionment.

He made up his mind to banish from his mind all idea of romance, to look upon her critically. If he had invested this girl with a glamor of beauty created out of his own imagination, he would know it. He tried to prepare himself for certain disappointment; of course, he had been an ass. Still, as he climbed the stairs, his senses were aquiver with an irrepressible anxiety, — what if she should be real, after all? He peered eagerly up at her. Again the sense of beauty, the radiant magnetism of it, swept over him; but he put it off, forced himself to note that that dim half-

light, which her black hair set against the golden background of the great gilt screen behind her on which refractions of light from beyond made a delicate shimmer and play of faint aureate coruscations, might be limning a nimbus which would fade away in the cold brightness of clear, white daylight.

Of course, he knew that she would tell him that Viscount Kikuchi was absent. He had planned for all that. Too bad! Might he not have a place for a moment where he might write him a note? She led him to the great desk in the big room. Now would be his chance — but before he could obtain a satisfactory look at her, she had disappeared. Hang it! He began to write his note. He had it all in his head, merely a polite word of regret, an assurance that his coming again so soon did not indicate that what he had in mind was at all important. He would call again. But he wrote slowly, hoping that she would come. Still he did not hear her until she was close beside him, with a tray with cigarettes and tea. She set it before him and stood facing him, a few feet distant, courteously at his service. All this would give time. He sipped slowly from the tiny, bowl-like cup, of the pale green, slightly aromatic fluid, took a cigarette, lit it. With the feeling of one who has placed a stake against the chance of a spun coin — he leaned back and looked at her.

Thank God, she was pretty, yes, even beautiful, with that great crown of soft black hair framing features delicately carved, finely-drawn crescent eyebrows; slender figure, but with the slightest suggestion of warm, soft curves under the closely clinging texture of the kimono. But it was the eyes which held him. He had often felt the appeal of the eyes of Japanese girls, with their appearance of intense blackness until very close view revealed the dark-brown shade, but in

this girl's eyes was a depth, a liquid sheen of luminous, limpid blackness which fascinated and held.

The feeling came to him that she was smiling. The mouth, features remained calm, unchanged, but it was as if she could convey with these marvelously expressive eyes alone mirth, amusement, probably also sorrow, anger, anything.

"I am sorry to have troubled you." He had to say something, even though he should have liked just to sit there and fill his eyes with the sight of her. "I hope I have not disturbed you — er — ?"

"My name is Adachi." She had caught the question which he had meant to imply.

"I have not seen you here before, Adachi-san."

"No, I have been here only a few weeks."

As he sipped his tea, he employed all his wit to maintain the conversation, enjoying the clear, soft sound of her voice, its musical contralto tone reminiscent of the subdued resonance of a great brass temple bell from a distance. But he wanted principally to build up ground for more intimate acquaintance, to become established as at least some one just a little more personal than the ordinary caller. She was smilingly responsive, gracious. He managed to remain a half hour, with commonplaces. The weather led to talk of the countryside, places she had seen, his own stay in Japan, and on to his impressions of the country, to mutual tastes.

He came away with a pleasant feeling of success that he had not been disappointed. Prosaic as their conversation had been, there had been a subtle, warm undercurrent of understanding, mutual sympathy, which was leading swiftly, surely, towards friendship. It was one of Karsten's theories that the feeling of attraction between men and women was intrinsically governed by an as yet little understood, undefined element of something like telepathy — that such attrac-

tion as was produced by merely physical features, such as beauty, for instance, was, if not unessential, at least only an outward, largely crude feature of the play of the relation between sexes. It could be explained most closely, said Karsten, in terms of physics, the response which is established between instruments similarly attuned, an intangible, invisible condition, which draws humans irresistibly, apparently irrationally, together in one case, while in another, where outward circumstances would seem to be more conducive thereto, they remain untouched, cold. Of course, there was something in it. Kent felt that some sort of sympathy like that existed between this girl and himself. Oddly, he was certain that he was not in love with her, and yet he craved intensely for intimate companionship with her.

A few days later he called again on the Viscount. He should have liked to have arranged it again so he would see the girl alone; still, it was time to get to work, to try somehow to establish a beginning point whence he might evolve his information. The beginning of the interview moved smoothly as he had planned, almost too smoothly. They arrived at the crucial point, the Bywater article, so easily that Kent had an uneasy sense that this smoothness, this facility, was deceptive, that the Viscount by some trick of intuition knew what he was after and was leading him on. The feeling disturbed him; he had to strive to overcome a sense of diffidence, a suspicion that he was but being played with by this uncannily clever diplomat, the master mind of the Japanese Empire, who had for decades gained experience at this game in bouts with the best trained brains of Europe and America.

"To come to the point, Mr. Kent, the fact is that it is believed, or at least suspected, that Japan, while living up to the letter of the Washington Conference

agreement, is, in fact, violating the spirit thereof; that while she is keeping her battle fleet strictly within the ratio of six to America's and England's ten, as she agreed to do, she is trying to make up for the difference in ratio by building up a great fleet of powerful submarines. I am glad that we may take up this matter together, for it is important that this misunderstanding be set right. The fact is, as naval statistics which have already been made public will show you, that we are merely trying to make our auxiliary fleet forces catch up to the proper proportion they should bear to the battle fleet. As you know, Japan is a poor country. In the past the naval authorities decided to build a great fleet of vessels of the first class, but to do so they had to give up building the number of auxiliary craft which is generally considered by the naval experts of all countries to be the minimum necessary to keep up the proportion between battleships and auxiliaries. In other words, as we did not have enough money to have both first-class ships and auxiliaries, we decided to build the big ships, even though we knew that we should be short of the smaller ones. Now that the Conference has made it unnecessary to spend the great sums set aside for battleship construction, we are using the chance to build smaller craft to the number necessary to make proper proportion. That's the reason you hear that we are building some submarines; but remember there's nothing sinister about that. We are merely rounding out our construction program along the lines recognized as being proper by all naval authorities. Of course, the mere fact that we are building is being made use of by the anti-Japanese propagandists, who seize anything whatever to make out a case against Japan. It's partly because Japan's liberal diplomacy of recent years had cut very short the crop of material that may be used as propaganda

against us. We have always kept our word in both letter and spirit. We gave the Chinese liberal terms in the Shantung settlement, and we have withdrawn our troops from Shantung. We were liberal in respect to Yap. We have withdrawn our troops from Siberia. We showed the world at the Washington Conference that we have no militaristic ambitions. Our action in all these cases has deprived the anti-Japanese propagandists of their old weapons, so now they must invent stuff for calumny. All we want is fair play. I know that you, Mr. Kent, are as interested as I am in maintaining the friendly spirit now existing between America and Japan; that you are glad to help combat the mischief-makers. Of course, you know that I must never be quoted — but I give you my word that there is not the slightest basis in fact for the belief that Japan is violating either the letter or the spirit of the Washington agreement, and the talk about her building an unduly large submarine fleet is pure buncombe."

The Viscount spoke earnestly, with a tone which made for conviction even though Kent had believed that he would talk on just about these lines. He had been impressed, had leaned forward intent to follow every word of the old statesman. Now he relaxed a little, leaned back in his chair, let his eye wander. Suddenly he felt as if some one had called sharply for his attention; involuntarily, mechanically, he looked past the screen. She was peering intently into the room, frankly eavesdropping, and her eyes were fixed on his as if she wished by mere force of will to compel him to look at her. Apparently that was it, for immediately the appearance of concentration vanished. She rose, gathered some envelopes and descended the stairs noiselessly in her soft *zori*.

There had been something indefinably impressive about these quite ordinary actions. Of course, she



would probably ordinarily have called from the hall below one of the innumerable office boys to mail her letters. That she had chosen to go herself might have some slight significance; but, even beyond that, the conviction came upon him as clearly as if she had shouted it to him that she wished to speak to him. Could it be that she really wanted to see him? The interview was over. He must go, anyway. He would soon know.

He thanked the Viscount, feeling the while that, impressed as he had been while under the direct sway of the old man's magnetism, the interview would become cold, worth little, when examined in the somber light of appraisal of its worth as copy. Had he been able to quote Viscount Kikuchi, it might have had some value. But as it was, he had gained nothing, not even the slightest clew. They shook hands and he left.

Once on the street, he glanced eagerly up and down for the nearest post-box. Yes, there she was, half hidden by the red, stunted column. He went up to her eagerly. She made no pretense that she was not waiting for him. As he came close, he could see that she was excited, almost breathless.

He lifted his hat. "Adachi-san." But she was too eager to pay heed to mere matters of courtesy. "Mr. Kent," for a moment he felt the pressure of a small hand on his sleeve, "he lied to you."

He was struck utterly dumb, could but stare at her amazed. His first reaction was one of disappointment. As he had hastened down to see her, he had had no conscious thought of what he might expect. His whole mind had been concentrated on the question as to whether he had really been right in thinking that she wished to see him clandestinely, out of the hearing of the Viscount. Now he realized that he must, sub-

consciously, have expected something quite different, something in the lines of furtherance of purely personal intimacy. And here she was evidently not interested in him at all as an individual, but had some obscure purpose connected with the political issue. He had to wrench his mind into adjustment to this entirely new aspect of the matter, as he stood, hat still in his hand, gaping at her.

"What? Lied about what? Do tell me ——"

But her eagerness had disappeared, though the excitement remained as her eyes flickered up and down the street. "No. I can't tell you, not now. I must hurry back to the office. The Viscount will miss me. Good-by."

She ran swiftly from him before he could even try to retain her.

"Well, I'll be hanged!"

Again he found the park a handy retreat where he might enter and ruminate undisturbed over the tangle of events of the last half-hour, the statement of the Viscount, the inexplicable mystery of this girl's sudden injection of herself into the game as one of the players where she should ordinarily have remained even less than a mere pawn; the bearing that her taking a hand therein might have on the solution of his problem.

As he reasoned it out, he decided that, as he had gained nothing from the interview, he might, by some chance whim of fortune, have made a still greater gain by the new element added by the girl's appearance in the play. Apparently she knew something. She might know a great deal. And evidently she wished to give him information, to put him straight. Why? It was not because she took any great personal interest in him; he was sure of that; her manner had shown no trace whatever of the element of individual attraction. Still,

what her reason might be was, after all, a secondary consideration; it was what she knew, what she could tell him, evidently wished to tell him, that mattered. He must follow up this chance-sent opportunity. Of course, he must see her again. She must expect it. It might be worse. Here he had wished to enter into some closer relation with her, friendship, intimate association, and now the chance had come; although from an amazingly unexpected angle. It even fitted right in with his work — but — as he thought it over, the keenness of the feeling of good luck faded. It was too romantic, melodramatic. He looked upon his work in the cold, keen light of the professional, as a gatherer of facts, of news, prosaic, practical, disdaining the blatant injection therein of the personal element of the “trained seals.” He might enjoy betimes coloring the drabness of everyday existence by trying to apply tints of romance — he had been rather inclined to do so lately; possibly it was the glamor of newness of a strange land, or a reflection from his association with Karsten, — but work and romance were inconsistent, conflicting. He did not want to mix personal relation with this girl with business, make use of her as a tool for prying into the secrets of Japanese officialdom. Such use of women might be practical, it had undoubtedly served in many cases, but it was distasteful to him, repellant. But, on the other hand, what could he do? The girl herself wished it. He was not stalking her, treacherously, with cold calculation, trying to inveigle her into an affair of affections with the intention of making her serve his purposes. It seemed rather as if she thought that, in some undiscernible way, he might serve hers. He did not know what to make of it. At one moment he would be pleased, exultant even, at this element of intense interest injected into his existence, and the next he would be

mystified, perplexed, impatient at his inability to see the road before him.

Women! It seemed as if one must ever become entangled, somehow, in the insinuating meshes of their ubiquitous activities.

## CHAPTER XIII

For days he went about in a state of irritating uncertainty. What should be his next step? There was no good reason for seeking further speech with the Viscount for the present. Obviously the alternative was to contrive to meet her on her way to or from the office, but this method was distasteful to him, savored too much of lying in wait for her, stalking her, as might a roué bent on philanderous enterprise. On the other hand, his conscience troubled him. Here it was possible, even likely that this girl might hold the key to his story, might give him the starting point which he needed. He owed loyalty to his paper. He felt that he was caught in a dilemma from which he might not extricate himself entirely honorably.

One morning, at the Foreign Office, young Kikuchi dropped a chance remark that his father had gone to Odawara for a few days. The idea struck Kent that here lay the way out. Fate seemed deliberately to have thrown the solution in his way, so he might see her without resorting to slinking contrivances. He looked at his watch. It was half-past eleven; this was Saturday and quite likely she would leave at noon. He hurried to her office. She was evidently about to leave.

"I am sorry. The Viscount has gone to the country." He thought he detected a hint of mischief in her eyes. Did she suspect him?

Would he have some tea? She came to his rescue before he had bethought himself of the next step. What a blessing that eternal tea-drinking ceremonial

could prove at times. Why, of course, he should like it very much.

So again he found himself in one of the Viscount's great chairs, alone with her. She brought the tray with tea and cigarettes. His success made him bolder. "Have some with me, please do."

It startled her a little. "Why, of course not."

"Why not? It is the custom in foreign countries, and I am a foreigner. Please?"

She smiled at his earnestness and gave in. Presently they were sipping tea together. The scene assumed an air of intimacy. They chatted pleasantly. The light silk shawl about her shoulders gave him a cue. "You're about to go out, are you not. I really shouldn't keep you, but ——"

"No, it's all right. It is Saturday, and I was thinking of going to the pictures."

The pictures! So she was another of Japan's millions of movie worshipers who form their ideas of Western civilization from the frenzied life of the cinema, Wild West pictures of cowboys rescuing lovely heroines from Indians and bandits, dainty damsels abducted in madly racing automobiles, passionate love scenes in lavishly upholstered abodes of plutocracy, gun-play and murder in city streets—all the wildly gyrating, delirious melodrama which ingenuous Japan seriously believes to be representative of life on the other side of the ocean. The thought of the discomfort of most of the Tokyo movie theaters, ramshackle fire-traps crowded with squirming, perspiring humanity, stifling in the afternoon heat, repelled him; still, it would not matter.

"I like the pictures very much too," he lied. "I wish you would let me go with you."

But she shook her head determinedly. No, a foreigner and a Japanese girl! It was too unusual.

"But are you then so old-fashioned?" He noted her quick frown. He had gained a little. "Are you then one of these Japanese who, like the old shoguns, want to hold Japan apart from the rest of civilization?" Now he knew he had the right argument.

She flashed at him. "I am not old-fashioned." Her tone softened a little. "But, of course, you know it is a little unusual for a Japanese girl and a foreign man to go on the street together."

He sensed that he had won and made no further argument, only rose and waited while she took away the tray. Together they went down the steps.

"And now where?" he asked.

"Why, Uyenô, of course, the art exhibition. I thought you ——"

He hastened to cut her short. "Yes, I know. But it is far. Let us have tiffin first. Where? What do you prefer, Japanese or foreign food?"

He knew she would prefer the rare experience of a foreign restaurant, as Japanese girls almost invariably do. They went to one of the best in Tokyo, a large, airy place thoroughly modern, a hot, wet towel in a small wicker tray, for wiping the face after the meal, being the sole concession to Japanese custom. As he sat facing her, he watched appreciatively the dainty grace with which her slim fingers, long practiced in agile manipulation of chopsticks, managed easily the unfamiliar silver. She was enjoying it, flushed a little, happily. He knew he would gain pleasure from this germinating friendship.

He wished to call a taxi, but she restrained him. "No, Uyenô is not so far. We will go by tram."

But why bother about a crowded tram? Taxis were not such a luxury.

"But they are a luxury. Why should we spend

money needlessly when the masses of the people must ride in trams or even walk. It is wrong." Her earnestness amused him. The deep seriousness of her expression lent her a charm as that of a child artlessly philosophizing. What odd surprises they held, the minds of these Japanese girls, ideas shaped from impressions gained God knows where. They compromised on an auto-bus.

The exhibition was crowded. It had always pleased him to note the character of the people who thronged such places, art galleries, concerts, theaters, high and low, rich and poor, a great number, in fact, persons to whom even the smallest fee must mean sacrifice of some material need. And here they were, as usual, small merchants, poorly paid artisans, some even fairly close to the coolie type, solemnly, seriously viewing the pictures, saying but little, absorbing, gratifying a natural, spontaneous love of beauty. What would happen to a New York bricklayer should he suggest to his mate that they go to see the Metropolitan Art Gallery? The grotesque contrast of the idea amused him.

They went through the Japanese art section first. He always enjoyed this part the best, for while he had small technical knowledge of art, he sensed a subtle gratification from the consummate perfection which the artists of Nippon had attained in this field of their own where century after century of painstakingly striving lovers of beauty had succeeded in gradually climbing higher and higher towards fashioning in concrete form the mirages of their vision. The eye rested, filled itself with the wealth of delicate beauty of pure, surely drawn lines, marvelously blended symphonies of color, almost imperceptible nuances of shade and tint, a myriad of infinitely carefully elaborated details which the makers contrived to weld into perfectly bal-



anced, full-toned consonance. There were the tremendous six-leafed screen paintings, incidents from legend or history of feudal Japan, knights in armor with long two-handed swords, archers with bow and quiver, women in scintillating kimono and elaborate coiffure, or, of even more ancient period, in simple flowing robes and with hair falling loose over their shoulders, reminiscent of the art of China, the original inspiration whence Japan had worked out that which was now her glorious own. There were landscapes on screen or scroll, serrated crag and cliff with gnarled pines overhanging foaming stream or glittering waterfall; quaint and charming bits of life of old, or still existing but ever disappearing Japan, — dancers in graceful postures, young girls in boats, slender lily hands lying languidly in limpid waters, brown old men, sickle in hand, garnering the rice, each ear of hundreds drawn with veritable botanical accuracy of detail, still retaining the free, swaying grace of nature.

It always cost him an effort to leave this section to enter that devoted to art after Western fashion, which was constantly, year after year, encroaching on, elbowing out of the way that fashioned after the ideals of old Japan. A few years ago there had been only a couple of these modern rooms; now those of the old and the new were almost even; soon the latter would predominate entirely. It seemed such a pity; it irritated him, the relentlessness of this march of progress? Still, it was in its way more instructive than the other, gave concrete, graphic illustration of the ideas and ideals of the young generation, what it was seeking, striving for, more or less uncertainly, but always coming nearer to the goal ever shimmering before it, mastery of the modern, the new culture.

They were improving. Every year the exhibitions showed more certain mastery of technique, better grasp

of the spirit of the French art which seemed to be the almost universally accepted school. Kent admitted it to himself grudgingly; every step in advance in this direction meant defeat of the old. What would it all amount to, after all? Even if, with their amazing facility for copying, for imitation, they might produce work which was creditable, which might pass muster even in Europe, as, in fact, some of the things he saw before him might, they would probably never climb out beyond the mediocre, would never attain original achievement. There were some very good portraits, excellent flower pieces, though, of course, this was but natural, considering that this subject was a preëminent favorite with the Japanese schools. Even some of the landscapes were undeniably fine, though, he noted, this was the case especially where some Oriental subject had been chosen, great, carved junks with blood-red sails glaring in the sunlight against a faint blue sky; mountain scenes following largely the composition of *kakemono* subjects, the delicacy of the latter being replaced by the more massive boldness made possible by the medium of canvas and oils.

He felt that he was ungenerous; still it irritated him that they should be making such headway in their apostacy. Only the nudes gave him an incongruous sense of satisfaction. They were atrocious and the exhibit was cluttered with them. In the old art of Japan, *kakemono*, color-print and screen, they were virtually unknown, but during the last few years the craze for them had swept over the moderns like an obsession; the very fact that they were utterly new to Japan, the sense that they were unconventional, modern, outré, was undoubtedly the reason. So there they were, scores of them, clumsy masses of female flesh, blatantly brazen, in all sorts of absurd and

contorted attitudes — and all these women were not nude, they were naked. The conception of the spirit, the idea of their French masters, the verve, the *élan*, they had missed it all. The paintings were bad, and the sculpture, with which the rooms were filled, was worse. Evidently these young enthusiasts had rushed forth fanatically intent to place on canvas something naked; almost anything would do. The clumsy, paunchy forms, shapeless limbs, invariably thick ankles, all seemed to indicate that they had found their models where best they might, among country wenches and servant maids, bringing forth on canvas or from clay mere lumps of flesh, utterly soulless reproductions of female kind.

Did they really wish to convey the idea that Japanese women looked like that? Did they wish, barbarously, to slaughter the conception of the *musume*, delicate, graceful, beautiful, and to substitute therefor as the ideal mere worship of flesh of the flesh? Damn them, it seemed such stupid, wanton brutality, brutishness even; a grossly sensuous libel on the womanhood of Japan. He glanced at Adachi-san, slender, dainty, flower-like. How was such a grotesque misconception possible?

He felt that she should have resented all this; but she was interested, far more absorbed in the moderns than she had been in the exhibits after the ancient mode. This was the section which young Japan enjoyed. Here the art students thronged, proud of their achievements or those of their fellows, young men with velvet jackets and baggy trousers, flowing ties and broad-brimmed, flapping hats. Their coarse, black hair flowed loosely down to their shoulders; those who could manage it had painstakingly cultivated little Van Dyke beards. Nearly all wore enormous, horn-rimmed spectacles. Here they were in their

element, prideful, self-certain in their assurance that they had advanced far beyond the *hoi polloi*, that they were the leaders. Conspicuously they would form groups, point out, discuss, criticize or go into raptures.

Evidently Adachi-san was quite well known here. Young fellows would bow to her, some would even address a few short remarks. She was plainly enjoying it all; she tried to communicate some of her enthusiasm to Kent, called his attention to work which she thought was well done. She even used some of the technical patter of the students. He wished he had been better informed in art, that he might have placed in convincing form the criticism which craved for expression. He was relieved when they left the exposition and began their return through Uyenno Park.

They found a seat at the edge of an abrupt slope where they had a wide view of the city. "You didn't care for it, Kent-san?" Her voice conveyed her disappointment.

"But I did. I like the truly Japanese things immensely; but that's just it, even though much of the modern stuff is very good — I won't deny it — it seems to me such a pity that Japan should sacrifice the wondrous values of her own art merely to trade them for imitations of that of the West which the other countries can do better than she can; just as Japan in all other things is throwing away her own which suit her, — her dress, her architecture, her manners, only to replace them with shoddy foreign clothes that don't suit Japanese figures; ramshackle hodge-podge buildings after no style at all; and all the rest. And then these student fellows. Can't you see that with most of them it is all pose?"

A couple of the artists passed, bowed courteously. He raised his hat to them.

"But it isn't pose, at least with only a few of them.

If you only knew how some of them slave and toil for the ideals they have, you wouldn't talk like that. They may seem absurd to you, or funny even, but I tell you, you would have a different idea of them, if you only knew them."

"Yes, I daresay they must be interesting to know." Throughout the afternoon he had sensed an indefinite resentment that she seemed to be so familiar with them. How did she come to know them so well? It was not jealousy, still, honestly, it might be something fairly close to that. But the whole thing irritated him. He wanted to get away from it, to some other subject. "It is getting quite late, Adachi-san. Let us have dinner somewhere."

But she would not get away from it. "Thank you very much, Kent-san. You're too good to me. But if you really think they may be interesting, why shouldn't we go to one of the places where they eat, right near here. Kent-san, you are the only foreigner whom I know, and you seem to be such, such a reactionary, and I want you to see our side of it. You foreigners ought to be the ones to help us, you know. I want you to, please." The slim, white hand was on his sleeve. She was looking at him earnestly, appealingly almost.

Hang it, the power which these eyes had over him; they could make him do anything, he felt. Of course, in a way, that was what he wanted, to allow himself complete abandon, inertly drifting, dreaming under the spell of that glorious, pervasive beauty, to let himself go under the hypnotism of her charm. But this was something entirely different; the injection of the element of intellect spoiled the whole thing. It was her beauty, not her brain he wished to enjoy, as one might be dreamily soothed by the spell of a picture, unheeding the mechanics to which it owed being. That

was her function, beauty. Why should she disrupt the harmony by bringing in thought, this crass, clamorous new thought that seemed like a plague of fever obsessing the new generation? "Our" side of it, she said. He wanted her to be Japan of droning temple bell, slender pagoda, rich, flaunting silks, not the Japan of steam, electricity and new thought. But her earnestness softened him. He would make the best of it. To-day, they had fallen into the wrong setting. He would contrive, next time, one more congruous with the idea which he had in mind.

"All right, Adachi-san, you shall be the guide."

She was radiant. "Kent-san, you are so good. I want you to be pleased, and I feel that you are not pleased, but I want you to know us too, me and my friends, and to like us, if you can."

They passed down the broad stone steps into a vast space of clanging street cars and jostling crowds. Then down a side street, a few blocks. She pointed to a sign, a gaudy female, presumably symbolically representing art or some such abstraction, holding in one hand a palm leaf and in the other a paintbrush. Over it was the inscription, in *kata-kana* characters, "*kafue montomarutoru*"; of course, that meant "café Montmartre."

He knew scores of the queer new cafés of Tokyo, but this one was of a type new to him. There were the same rickety tables and chairs, but crowding the walls, leaving scarcely an inch of clear space, were vast oil paintings, tremendous stretches of canvas, all depicting nudes, in every possible position and surrounding, in bath houses and by mountain pools, posing in front of mirrors or just standing upright vacantly, without apparent intention at all; huge figures, clumsy, ill-formed, a mass of light-brown or pink, indelicate flesh pervading and dominating the entire room.

The tables were crowded, the long-haired, bespectacled ones had evidently here a habitat, a homely Parnassus, where they might worship that which they conceived to be art, amidst an atmosphere of beer, bad cooking and the eternal nudes. They found seats at a table with some of them, who smiled and made room with great politeness.

It was an odd mess. Still, since he was definitely in for it, he might as well do his best to draw from the incident whatever he might. But he could not get over the incongruity of it, Adachi-san, dainty, modest, with only an inch or two of clear ivory-tint below the throat showing under the embroidered *eri* neckband, surrounded by this mob-like throng of utter nakedness.

"And do you really like all that?" He swept his hand disparagingly towards the walls.

"Ssst," she placed her hand warningly on her lips. "Please don't talk so loud, Kent-san. He made them, the proprietor over there. He runs the restaurant for a living, but he paints, too, these things."

Were they all going crazy; even second-class restaurateurs snatching moments between steaks and chops to worship fanatically at the new shrines? He was about to speak, to express to her his wonder at these ever more astounding revelations, when he became aware that some one had come up to them, a Japanese of about thirty, less conspicuously bohemian than the others, still apparently one of the artist tribe. He bowed with quiet dignity to Kent. "I beg your pardon, but I couldn't help overhearing, and I should like very much to know what you think." He turned to the girl. "Please, Adachi-san, won't you introduce me to your friend."

She was plainly pleased as she made the introductions. Kent was a friend, she blushed a little. The

newcomer was Sugawa, "a great artist," she added, "one of our best."

Sugawa smiled to Kent. "Women exaggerate so," he remarked in perfect English. Then he fell back to Japanese, evidently for the benefit of the girl. "I saw you at the exhibition this afternoon, and now again here, and I am sure that you don't like what we do. You are an American, are you not? I thought so. And you know we Japanese like Americans for their frankness, the American frankness. I wish you would tell me just what you think about it, and, if you care, I'll tell you just what we think, what we are trying to do."

"The American frankness." That was the usual prelude, the favorite gambit for opening a conversation in which Japan drew out skillfully the thoughts and views of America, but only so seldom gave like return, remaining unrevealed, unknown, behind that curiously baffling wall of national reticence. His courtesy had been perfect, disarming; still what business had he to come breaking in upon them like that! "American frankness." He probably wouldn't like it when he received it, but since that was what he asked for, he should have it, in full measure.

"In the first place, I must tell you that I am no artist and have but small knowledge of such matters, but I can tell you how I feel, how probably most of us foreigners feel when we see you lightly abandoning the immeasurably fine heritage from your forefathers to make mediocre offerings to foreign idols." He swept on, expressed his feelings just as he would have spoken to Kittrick or Karsten; it became almost a tirade. He began referring to pictures he had seen that afternoon, things he particularly remembered; but as he went on picking into bits, relentlessly, this and that painting, the clumsy clay images, the other's face



showed no resentment, expressed instead absorbed, intelligent attention. Kent felt that he had gone a little too far and wished to tone it down a little.

"Even if you, some of you, at least, have done surprisingly well, especially considering the shortness of time, what particular good will it do? Even if in time you should bring forth a Gauguin or a Matisse, the others are doing all that; you will have but added to the cumulative results; whereas in your own field you are unique, undisputed masters of an art that is valuable and fine, that will become lost if you fellows don't follow it up. I hope that I have not offended you, but it seems such a pity."

The other smiled. "No, of course I'm not offended. I asked for frankness and got what I asked for. And, you know, it is not new to me, this feeling of you foreigners that we should continue along the old line. That's what my teachers were telling me, in America and in Paris. That's what you Westerners always want, in art, in architecture, in dress, customs, life, to have us remain the quaint, exotic, strange country. You are like the people who think it a pity that a pretty kitten must grow up to be a cat, and who would like to have a child remain always a child. On one hand you praise the adaptability with which we have acquired your civilization, and on the other you hate to see the old, quaint Japan go — to see it change so as to become but one more of the many countries of the earth which are so much alike. You feel that the world is becoming too much the same all over, that London, and New York, and Paris, and now Tokyo will be all the same, will afford no new, strange sights and sensations; that Japan is being lost as a charming playground for you. But what about us? In the first place, we wanted to remain as we were, but the foreigner forced us to become one with him. No,"

he smiled, "I don't resent it. I am glad it happened, but the fact remains. You praise us for adopting your civilization, and still that doesn't mean only building steamships, and railroads and all that. That's the least part of it. That's superficial. What really counts is our emancipation from feudalism, from the rule of the few masters, attaining expression of the individuality, and that's the real Western civilization which Japan, the Japanese people, has just begun to grasp. Then why shouldn't we follow our own wishes, each his own, each man, for instance, painting as he pleases, old style, modern style, after Hokusai or after Gauguin. You say that we are not producing the art of our forefathers, but you don't see Europe producing any Titians or Tintoretos. Of course, so far we are only imitating, we are learning, copying, but why shouldn't we some day do as well as you do, maybe even better? Now we have joined in the march of progress of common civilization. We can't go backwards, we can't remain stationary. We must go on. Art is only one phase of the whole thing, but ——"

But he was interrupted by a jangling of bells, clamor of voices.

"*Gogai!*" the hoarse shout came in from the street. "*Gogai!*"

An extra. They were rushing to the windows, the door. "Hey, come here, in here."

A little old man ran in, breathless, amid a jingle from a bunch of small bells clustered from his belt. Under his arm he held a bundle of small printed sheets, the *gogai*, extras, great news of some kind. They all crowded around him, tore the papers from him as he gathered in their coppers.

Tokyo had been in a fever of excitement for days. The discovery had been made that a score of carloads of the arms left in the care of the Japanese army when

He read it to her, pleased, with a feeling that her interest was drawing them together, that in some way, as yet undefinable, they were being brought into that intimacy which he craved.

She listened intently, a tiny furrow between the black crescent brows, thinking. "Kent-san," she said suddenly, as if she had arrived at a decision after careful deliberation. "You can add that the Premier does not believe the explanation of the General Staff; that he has told them so. It isn't fear of the fall of the Cabinet only that keeps him from making deeper investigation. The secret of it all is a question of the old clans, the Satsuma and the Choshu. The Premier is Satsuma, General Matsu is Choshu. The General threatened that if he were not backed up he would make it a clan fight, Choshu against Satsuma, and he would, too. They stop at nothing, these militarists. And Viscount Kikuchi had to straighten it out, to show them that if the governing classes fought among themselves at this time, it would give the people, the masses, he calls them, a chance. These old rulers know they must stick together, the old, the iron-hard men, the feudalists, against the people, against young Japan. Oh, it's so bitter, Kent-san, not only class against class, but generation against generation, even among the aristocracy; father against son, even. Some time you should talk to young Kikuchi, if he'll agree to talk to you about it. That, Kent-san, that's the real story."

In an indefinite way he had suspected that something like that was the case. That enmity existed among the various departments of the Government was an open secret, but this version, the clan fight, gave a picturesque, human-interest angle to the story that he rather liked.

"Yes, that's interesting; but you know I can't send

stuff like that unless I'm sure it's correct. How do you know? I must know that the source is reliable."

The car stopped; they had reached the post-office. He jumped out; then he leaned forward into the car. "Adachi-san, how can I know that it is true?"

She stooped towards him. He was looking straight into these lustrous eyes, brilliant, close. "I am telling you, Kent-san."

There was no time for debate; the cable office would close in a few minutes. As he copied his message on to the printed blank, his thoughts were racing, occupied with the girl's story. Should he take a chance? He hesitated for a moment. "Persons in position to know" — his pencil framed the words half mechanically. He felt an odd conviction that she was right. The clerk reached over for the message; he was in a hurry to get his work done and get away. Well, let it go.

He found her standing in the street beside the car. "Step in, Adachi-san, I'll take you home."

"No, there is no need for the car now. I shall walk."

Again that peculiar prejudice against what she ingenuously deemed the luxuries of the privileged classes. What a potpourri of quaint ideas stirred in that brain behind those delicately curved brows, those wonderful eyes, and yet she appeared extraneously so like all those Japanese girls whom one saw casually, everywhere, thinking idly that they harbored only thoughts of flower arrangement, tea ceremonial, or the ordinary dreams and aspirations of girlhood. She had given him but casual glimpses at her mind, evanescent, baffling flickers, stimulating curiosity, tempting him to learn, to find out, to intimacy. So far the day had given no opportunity for confidential talk; mischievous mischance seemed to have been ever

bent, vexatiously, on intervening. Now the walk might afford better chance.

She lived near Kanda-bashi, she said. They passed along the crowded streets, crossed the Ginza and turned down the broad street along the palace moat. Here there was no one. He took her hand, and, hand-in-hand, child-like, as do young Japanese couples, they walked on. But she was in no mood for personal talk. The moon; see how the light refracted on the green-oxidized copper roofs of the palace buildings, and the black reflections of the gnarled pines in the silvery water! She was thoughtful, a little serious. He walked on with her, wholly happy at the sense of her nearness, the softness of the small hand in his, languorously content.

At the Kanda bridge she stopped. "Here I leave you. I live over there." She indicated a dark mass of houses on the other side of the bridge. "And thank you, Kent-san, you have been so good to me."

But he held on to her hand. "But, Adachi-san, first you must tell me when I may see you again. I must see you, often, like this."

She smiled a little. "Why?"

"Of course. We shall be friends, good friends, shan't we?"

"But I am always so busy, really. I have so little time."

"Of course, you have time. Say Wednesday." She shook her head. "Well, then, Saturday afternoon; then I know you have time. I shall wait for you in Hibiya, at the fountain by the wistaria arbor, at noon, please."

But again she shook her head. He clung to her hand, insisting. Suddenly she pulled it free, laughed. "All right then, next Saturday." She moved away a few steps, then abruptly, impulsively, she plucked

from her hair a rose, held it over to him. "For you, Kent-san. Good-night, *o-yasumi nasai*."

He stood holding the flower, watching her as she moved swiftly over the bridge and disappeared in a narrow lane between the dark buildings. He found a rickshaw. Despite subconscious realization that the day had, after all, been drab, commonplace, disappointing, he felt in an exalted mood. The trotting figure of the rickshaw coolie faded from his consciousness; it was as if he were alone, with his thoughts, dreams. What a wonderfully complicated little beauty she was, entirely different from any girl he had known, had ever imagined; mysterious with her passionate devotion to the new things, art, the political flux and ferment, her peculiarly insistent abhorrence at the luxuries of the rich, and then, finally, that inconsistent flash of coquetry. Now he must carry on, get the explanation of all this, learn her thoughts, attain intimacy. She piqued him with her elusiveness, but it added to his zest. But what did he wish, after all? He enjoyed the sense of being surrounded, enveloped in her beauty; yet he was not in love with her — no, he was not — there was no desire of conquest, to embrace her, to clasp her in his arms in possession. And still he had realized distinct enjoyment at holding her hand. It was intensely interesting, her evident acquaintance with the manipulation of the hidden strings which actuated the secret workings of the government behind the scenes. Yes, that also caused attraction; yet he had been drawn to her, irresistibly, with the direct certainty which compels steel to a magnet, even before he had heard a word from her, by the sheer compulsion of her beauty. Hang it, it was all very puzzling, this not being able to define what was really stirring within one's own mind. Still, he was no psychoanalyst. He gave it up. He would let

the thing take its course, let fate work it out according to its own inscrutable arrangement.

He held the rose to his face; yes, he was certain; of all the incongruous, clashing incidents of the day, this was the one he liked best.

## CHAPTER XIV

The following morning Kittrick dropped in to discuss the news. But there was little to discuss; all Japan was unanimous in the belief that the official statement constituted but a very crudely contrived whitewash. "I think though that the Foreign Office might have summoned courage to challenge the General Staff had it been able to get irrefutable proof that it engineered the deal to Chang Tse-lin," said Kittrick. "But they failed to get it, so they were in fact quite wise in not making a charge which they could not back up. I think, though, that the Premier made a mistake in issuing the statement over his own signature. Now he has tarred himself with the same brush as the militarists, and if the world loses whatever confidence it gained in Japan at the Washington Conference, Japan has only herself to blame."

"I think ——" began Kent, but he was interrupted by a noise at the door, and the Great Nishimura strode in, radiant, flatulent with self-importance.

"Hello, Nishimura-san," Kent waved him to a chair. "We were just talking about the Premier's proclamation. What do you think of it?"

"Bunk!" He dismissed the matter with a scornful sweep of the hand. "Gentlemen, congratulate me; I'm going to be a candidate for the House of Representatives."

"Good for you; congratulations. What party will it be, Seiyukai or Kenseikai?"

"Ah, that's a detail that hasn't been decided yet. We shall find out first which party seems to be the



strongest in my native place where I'm going to run; we're a little uncertain yet. But the most important part, the financial arrangement, has all been fixed up, so probably, gentlemen, a short time from now you shall address me as the Honorable Nishimura, and, who knows, some day it may be His Excellency Nishimura. Finally my talents are being recognized by the people that count. I know the game, and I shall go far — and I shan't forget my friends." He smiled effusively. "In fact, that's what I came in about, to see if you two gentlemen would care to join me in a little celebration, just us three. Now, you know, it is not the common thing for us Japanese gentlemen to go to the Yoshiwara. It isn't done, at least not openly. We go to geisha houses when we want relaxation for 'the tired business man,' as you Americans say. But the fact is, an old client of mine owns one of the first-class houses in the Yoshiwara, and to tender his respects to me he has invited me to come with a few friends to his place — so I thought you might like to come."

"Why, thanks, Nishimura-san, I think I'd like to go." Kent had never seen the Yoshiwara. He had meant to see it, just as he had meant to see the Imperial Museum and the tombs of the Forty-seven Ronin, some day, ever postponing with the knowledge that he might go at any time. "What about you, Kittrick?"

"Sure I'll go. The Yoshiwara isn't what it used to be, is it, Nishimura-san?" The great man shook his head sadly. "Still we shall enjoy the excellent hospitality of the coming Premier of Japan."

"Who knows?" he smiled deprecatingly. "All right, gentlemen, I shall be here at seven with a car."

The car he brought must have been one of the largest in Tokyo, an enormous thing with an interior re-

splendent with mirrors, cut-glass flower holders and manifold glittering nickel trimmings. "Not a hired car, this," explained Nishimura. "It belongs to the Watanabe interests, my backers, who are now assisting me. Step in."

They swept through Tokyo, through a dimly lighted section of narrow streets, emerging presently into a quarter where great buildings, brilliantly lighted, presented a vivid contrast to the surrounding squalor. "Here we are," announced Nishimura. "The nightless city of wine, and song, and beautiful women. You have nothing like that in America."

"I'd like to take a look around before we go to your place," said Kent. "Do you mind?"

"I shall show you the place, and then you two can walk about a bit. I shall wait for you. I cannot well be seen in these streets, you know."

Their destination was an enormous house, three-storied, gorgeous with elaborate carvings and gilt ornamentation. Kittrick and Kent set out down the wide street, bright in the blaze thrown out from the scintillating glare from the great buildings, all spotless, prosperous looking, glittering with light and tinsel. Along the front of each house ran a great hall-like space. One entered and faced a show-window-like arrangement, where rows of large portraits of women, each bearing a name, appeared, set in variously arranged backgrounds of gilt screens, vases with flowers, heavy hangings of brocade, excellently executed silk scroll pictures. At each end of this was a small box, ludicrously like a pulpit, in which sat men, the doorkeepers, who drove the bargains with the guests. Some sat silently, impassively suffering the crowds to flow by, stirred to action only when inquiries were made of them. Others were busy, after the fashion of barkers at a fair, praising their wares, calling attention

to the beauties displayed, to the cheap prices. In some houses huge open gateways allowed glimpses of gardens, meticulously arranged with stone lanterns, miniature shrines, grotesquely gnarled pine trees throwing their shadows in the soft light flooding the space from the windows above, each a delicately contrived, entrancing little fairyland, inviting, alluring.

They passed down narrower streets, mere alleys, where the lights were dim, the houses smaller, some displaying but three or four portraits, and where the barkers were more insistent. But throughout it all was noticeable the almost entire absence of women. Here and there, especially in the smaller places, a painted face might be glimpsed for an instant between parted curtains, titters might be heard behind drawn *shoji*, and from above would come the strident whimper of samisen and high-pitched female voices; but that was all.

As they progressed, the sameness grew tiring; one became irritated at the monotony of these rows and rows of stiffly smiling portraits staring at one, all so curiously alike that soon they gave the impression of a vast composite picture.

"I don't see much in it," commented Kent. "It seems to me drab, tedious. Many of the settings are fine, beautiful even, but so much of it is sordid, these barkers and the pictures, the gross commercial hawking of women with as little feeling as if they were meat in a butcher shop. I can't see the temptation."

"You came too late," said Kittrick. "You ought to have seen this place a few years ago, when the women were displayed, when these fronts faced right up to the street, showing the girls behind gilded bars. You could look down an entire street, a blaze of light and gorgeous color. Here would be a dozen girls with

high coiffures, whitened faces and painted lips, all clad alike in costly silks, gold and crimson, set against a background of heavy brocade and among massive, carved *hibachi* and mirrors; here, in the next place, would be a score of women in purple and silver, shimmering against hangings of soft-toned velvet; farther on would be another row, in dark blue and white, in the background marvelous carvings and dwarf pines and flowers, and so on, as far as eye could see, a kaleidoscope of glittering and glimmering gilt, and lacquer, and bronze, and constant, restless fluttering of soft textures, blazing colors, riotously bewildering, all decking and displaying thousands of women for sale, — a truly barbaric phantasy of the Orient, where, if one could forget the beastly commercialism of it all, one might at least have a picture, flamingly, prismatically dazzling eye and imagination. And then came the reformer. He pointed out, quite rightly, of course, that it was degrading to the great Japanese nation to have its women displayed, like animals, in cages. So they put an end to that part of it, the beauty, the splendor, and did away with the only excuse that the Yoshiwara ever had for existence; for then, by the gods, you might well have called it one of the Seven Wonders of the World."

They returned to the house where Nishimura was awaiting them. A flock of servants, male and female, attended them. They were evidently honored guests. In a large room, they found Nishimura and his host. It was enormous, hall-like almost, with spotless *tatami* matting, as usual with only a low table, effulgent in crimson lacquer, some soft silk *zabuton*, but the few ornaments, an ancient *kakemono* in the *tokonoma* recess and a couple of vases, were evidently antiques of great price. Nishimura introduced the host, a patriarchal gentleman in rich, black silks, white-bearded,

dignified, incongruously venerable when one thought of the nature of his commerce.

"You understand, of course, that our coming here like this to-night is altogether unusual," explained Nishimura. "Ordinarily guests to come here must first have gone to the introducing house, to get admission. This is one of the best houses, and it doesn't take in people just from the street. But we're friends, and you don't even have to pick your ladies from the portraits. You shall see them all in the flesh. It's a great honor."

The old man smiled benignly, clapped his hands.

Patter of feet and swish of silks in the corridors beyond. Then suddenly a sliding partition moved aside and a score of girls tripped into the room, arranged themselves in a long, curved row about the men, stood there, like soldiers for inspection, all clad alike in crimson and gold, some haughtily indifferent, others smiling or tittering, a flaunting picture of color, crimson lips, white faces, black hairdress, shimmering wealth of soft undulating textures.

The old man swept out his hand towards the line of girls. "Please, gentlemen, select from among these unworthy women the ones whom you wish to serve you."

The white men were a bit embarrassed. It was very difficult to choose in such an array of beauty. They pointed, hesitatingly, almost at random, to two girls, who left the row slowly, knelt on the mats before them. One of the older girls was picked by Nishimura. "The oldest are the best," he advised.

The other girls moved out, procession-like. "And now, would you care to see my poor place?" The host rose and they followed him. It was a vast building through which he led them, tier upon tier of rooms set in a square about a garden, dark-green foliage re-

fracting the soft shimmer of light filtering on all sides through the rows of *shoji*; through the verdure might be glimpsed clumps of flowers, a tiny stream with a miniature red, high-curved bridge. They walked through a maze of corridors over dark, brilliantly polished hardwood floors, a labyrinth of passages and stairways, past score upon score of rooms. Throughout was noticeable an air of taste, artistically planned arrangement of pictures, furnishings and ornaments, all spotless. The whole thing bore an air of refinement, delicately restrained artistry, perfection, vitiated only by the uneasy thought lurking ever in the background of the mind, the pity that all this beauty should be devoted to the most sordid commerce of man.

They returned to the first room, and immediately a throng of servant women, soberly clad in dark kimonos, their unpainted faces a relief after the array of bedizened vendors of beauty, brought the bewildering multitude of courses which made the banquet. Hot sake was served in small stone bottles. At the elbow of each man sat the girl of his selection, watchfully keeping his cup filled. Nishimura's handmaiden was busy; he expanded in talk.

As he flowed on unendingly, he became interesting with the intimate details of his affairs. It was informing; still it struck Kent that, after all, he was their host, and he must not be allowed to unbosom himself unwisely. He managed to whisper to him. "Aren't you a bit frank, Nishimura-san; remember these women may talk."

Nishimura laughed. "How little you know about the customs of Japan, Kent-san. Don't you know that we of Japan, we statesmen and business men, transact our most important business to the pleasant accompaniment of women, geisha generally, of course, but this is the same. Why, big business deals are closed the best

when the presence of beauty stimulates the brain and makes more receptive the mind of the man you deal with. That's why such is no business for striplings who would let their thoughts wander, but for us maturer and wiser men. Have another drink, Kent-san, and talk safely, as freely as you please. Or possibly I have bored you?"

He hastened to reassure him. "No, not at all; on the contrary, it is all intensely interesting; only I can't understand just why you're so eager to get into the political game. You are making money from your business, and politics must surely interfere."

"Ah, how little you know of politics. Now I shall instruct you." He leaned back on his cushion, drew a deep breath, expanded, reminiscent of the fabled bull-frog. The woman beside him hastened to fill his cup. He drained it and held it out to her mechanically. She filled it again.

"You must know, surely, that in all countries business and politics, economics, go together. That's why it's called political economy." He had adopted a didactic tone, and frowned as if wrestling with ponderous problems, pleased with his rôle as the instructor. "That's the way it is in all civilized countries, only in Japan we have attained somewhat greater perfection, coördination, yes, coördination." The word pleased him. "Still even here it was until quite recently even better than it is to-day. You remember the Manchuria Railway scandal, when such a fuss was made because what had been gained, outside the rules — but what are rules — had found its way to the coffers of the Seiyukai party; and the Kwantung opium affair. Think of it, one official testified that he had turned six million yen of opium money over to the party funds. That's how parties may be made great and be able to see to it that trustworthy men are elected to the Diet.

But then the Kenseikai stepped in and caused trouble, foolishly forgetting that some day they may be in power themselves — still, possibly they were actuated by some higher motive, I don't know yet."

Evidently he had remembered that presently he might find himself a Kenseikai candidate. The same thought struck Kittrick.

"But you said that you didn't know whether you'd be a Seiyukai or a Kenseikai candidate. Now, which party platform conforms the most with your principles?" He grinned.

Nishimura waved his hand impatiently. "Oh, platforms! When I was in the States I heard of that all the time. Platforms!" He snapped his fingers. "In Japan we do not tie our statesmen's hands with foolish platforms. We observe the events when they happen and shape our actions accordingly. Wise men do not cross bridges till they come to them. We have no party platforms, at least none to speak of."

"But what do your parties amount to, then?"

"It's the men that count. Our people vote for the men whom they trust, whom they know to be wise. It's the men that count."

"But you haven't explained yet why you're so eager to get into this game?" broke in Kent.

The great man sighed and composed himself patiently to further explanation, as might a man indulgently bear with the inept questions of children. "Well, of course, you see there is power, and influence, and also money, a great deal of money, if one knows the game."

"How much do you get as a member of the Diet?"

"Three thousand yen a year."

"And how much do you figure your election will cost you?"

"At least fifty thousand."



"Then I don't see it. You are elected for four years, but the Diet may be dissolved at any time, and then you are out. In other words, you risk fifty thousand on a chance to gain a maximum of twelve thousand and possibly only three. And I thought you were a business man."

The criticism irritated Nishimura, drew him out entirely. With outstretched hand he warded off further questions. He held out his cup; the woman filled it, and he drained it, composing himself to the task of explaining elementals.

"Of course I don't pay that fifty thousand. That comes from the Watanabe interests. You know, of course, that the future of Japan lies in industry and commerce, and that's in the hands of the great interests, the Watanabes, the Katos, the Oharas and the other big ones and some smaller ones. These interests are patriotic; they know that to succeed Japan must have in the Diet men with experience and vision who will help their industries and make Japan great. So they see to it that the right men are elected. The Watanabes, for instance, are very patriotic and always figure on having about ten men in the House, and the rest all have their own men whom they can depend on. That's why they are helping me."

"Still, if you are elected, you only get the three thousand. That's mighty little to pay for your time and trouble."

Nishimura was almost at the end of his patience, still he made a last effort. "But don't you know that there are many others to whom a Diet member may be useful. Some one wants to help build up Japan's merchant marine, and he naturally needs a subsidy. So he comes to me, and I look into the proposition and it seems worthy, and he pays me for my trouble in examining it, ten, twenty, thirty thousand yen. And an-

other wants the right to place signs on all the Government telegraph poles, and I look into that, and I get another ten, twenty thousand yen. It is all so plain; every one knows it."

"But it seems to me that comes pretty close to accepting bribes, and you said just now that that proved unhealthy for the Manchuria and the Kwantung officials."

"Oh, hell!" He had to resort to English for emphasis. The host, who had been sitting by wonderingly, compassionately tendered him a drink with his own hands. He swallowed it hastily. "That's altogether different. These are officials under the law, and such are not allowed to take bribes; but we legislators, we're not officials under that law. Do you think we could be expected to work for nothing. Of course, nobody expects that. And then even the officials, nobody cares much. In the opium scandal, Kata got only six months for accepting a bribe, and some of the other big men got about that or less — and, of course, in many cases the sentences were very properly deferred. You must have read in the papers how it was given out that some of the leaders held such high orders that they could not be prosecuted, because it would be a national disgrace to send to jail men holding such honorable decorations. Ah, some day," he sighed and held out his cup for more sake, "some day I may be such a high official myself."

The host had seen that the guest of honor was becoming wearied. He clapped his hands, the *shoji* slid aside and six geisha appeared, with samisen and drums and bustled about, making ready for their performance. The men stretched themselves out more comfortably. As the geisha danced, the sake was passed ceaselessly. Nishimura was becoming sleepy, yawned stentoriously.

The host took the hint. "And now, Nishimura-san, would you retire?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm sleepy and a little, just a little drunk." The host waved his hand and the geisha disappeared. The men arose. Nishimura was led off, leaning heavily on his woman, arm flung over her shoulder. In the doorway he looked back, smiling flabbily, insinuatingly. "Well, so-long, gentlemen. Have a pleasant rest. *O yasumi nasai.*"

The girl led him off, wobbling dangerously. Kent ran to her assistance, and between them they managed to convey him precariously down stairways and through long corridors, to her rooms. The woman sank to her knees, bowed, her forehead almost touching the mats. "Thank you very much. I am sorry that I have troubled you." She stepped into the room. The partition closed behind her. Kent found himself alone. He looked about for Kittrick, but no one was in sight. It was late. The samisen play and singing had ceased. As he wandered through the long hallways he lost his bearings in the vast, labyrinthic house. From the garden below the soft splash of a fountain came up to him. In the silence the great gilt carvings, intricately fashioned lanterns hanging from the eaves, shining surfaces of lacquer refracting lustrously dim light filtering through paper *shoji*, the air of beauty, still, dream-fraught, brought the impression of a fairy palace asleep. But as he faltered on, seeking the room whence he came, past row on row of rooms, closed *shoji*, he sensed rather than heard a minute quaver of sound, the faint sibilance of a multitude of whispers, coming from all about him, from behind frail walls and paper partitions, stirring of unseen men and women, titillation of restrained giggling, indefinite, intangible, blending into a vague murmur, a composite, infinitely low, indistinct background of sound.

"Oh, there you are. I have looked for you everywhere." He heard a soft laugh behind him. It was the girl who had sat with him at the feast. "Come." A soft little hand clasped his. He had been perplexed at his helplessness, alone in that great house, silent except for the subdued murmur of bought caresses, purchased kisses, the parody of love played by these poor, painted houris behind the *shoji*. So he suffered her to lead him on, uncertain as to what was about to come, still relieved at having again definite destination.

"Where is my friend, the other foreigner?"

Her slim hand indicated vaguely the long row of closed sliding partitions before them. "There, somewhere. Now, these are my rooms; please enter." She placed a silk cushion in front of him, sank to the floor, prostrated herself before him, face held low towards her hands spread flat on the *tatami*, waiting.

"Thank you." He squatted on the cushion. She rose.

"Tea?"

"Please." With deft fingers she brought out the minute paraphernalia, doll-like cups and teapot, poured hot water from the kettle simmering over the glowing charcoal in the *hibachi*. He looked about; speckless as usual, and dainty, cozy. She had managed to give the room an air of personality, almost homelike, pathetic, with a doll enthroned on a little couch of her own contrivance, her small cupboard showing through glass doors frail china, figurines, temple charms, souvenirs from little excursions which formed the great events of her life. The partition to the next room had been slid aside. He glimpsed chests of fine-grained, unpainted wood where she kept her finery. A pile of crimson silk *futon*, great wadded quilts, formed a bed on the floor, almost filling the tiny room.

He finished his tea, then she indicated the room beyond.

"And now, danna-san, if it pleases you to retire, I shall change my kimono."

He looked at her. Through the evening he had hardly noticed her, as she sat behind him, silent, self-efface, like a brilliantly colored, hardly perceived shadow. How young she was, and how expressionless her face, unlined, untouched by the exactions of her sorry trade—almost like that of the doll over there, vapidly pretty with its eternal smile. "No, I think not, not now." He noted the wondering, half-frightened expression on her face, and hurried on. "What's the name of your doll?"

Her face brightened, became alive. "Oh, that's Tamayo-san, tamayo, egg, you know, because she's so fat. I have two more. Would you like to see them?" He would. She brought them out. This one had been sent her from her father, from Kiryu. As she prattled on, he drew from her her little history. Daughter of a tenant farmer; she had worked at silk spinning. Then the house had been destroyed by a typhoon, and, like several other girls in her village, she had gone to the Yoshiwara, snapped up by one of the agile agents whom news of the disaster had brought to the spot, alert for business. "They paid fifteen hundred yen for me," she said proudly. "But then, this is one of the best houses, and then I was only sixteen. I am eighteen now."

"Was she unhappy here? Would she not like to go home to her people?"

"Yes, of course, I'd like to go home. Sometimes it's bad here, when the honorable guests are drunk and rough; and some of the other girls are mean and tell lies, and cause trouble. They are jealous of me, and of Yurike-san, and Ainosuke-san, because we are

the most popular and make the most money. You know, it's fun every month to go down and look in the big book, for, you know, they must show us our accounts, and see how much you have saved. For I am saving. I'm not like some of the girls who spend all their money on clothes and foolish things and are always in debt. But here the master is pretty good, and in a couple of years I'll have a thousand yen all my own. In some places the masters are cruel and bad and keep the girls in debt always, so they can never get away. No," she cocked her head with a quaint judicious air as if she were gravely weighing the pros and cons; "it isn't so bad."

She spoke of the whole thing as if it were an ordinary business proposition, as she might speak of work in a cotton-spinning mill, or any other occupation. Did she then fail utterly to sense the degradation of her sorry occupation?

"But what about the men then, these scores and scores of guests, caressing you, fondling you ——?"

"Oh, of course, that is unpleasant, but then I don't think of them. *Shikataganai*, it can't be helped. I don't give my heart to them; and then in a few years I shall go home, with lots of money, and I shall marry a nice man, and I shall have only him and love him. And then I shall have babies, real babies, instead of dolls."

He was glad that she was like that, that the sordidness and shame passed by her unnoticed, not thought of. Here was surely a "lotus in the mud," as the proverb had it about these women, who, oddly innocent, mind apparently untouched by the grime and depravity of her surroundings, contrived to keep her spirit untouched, apart from it all. But then, she was only a simple peasant girl, ignorant of moral codes, undisturbed by considerations above physical comfort.

But there must be others, more imaginative, more complex, with minds sensitive to the constant insult offered by sensuous leer, sake-fraught breaths in their faces, the compulsion of offering love, or the semblance thereof, for a consideration of money, to a succession of unknown men, unsympathetic, contemptuous, careless of their womanhood. As the thought came to him that here, within the space of a few squares of houses, were thousands of these women, many of them surely with delicately adjusted girl souls, enslaved by circumstance to sacrifice what would have been pure, sweet love aspirations, in this vast market place of meretricious caresses, he could understand the indignation of the reformer whom he had heretofore regarded, superciliously, as a well-meaning meddler.

He was relieved at the arrival of Kittrick. His girl was with him. She and Kent's companion whispered together animatedly. Kittrick yawned. "Well, what about it?"

"I'm glad you came. In fact, I was just wondering how I might manage to slip out of this."

"All right, why not? We can make some excuse surely." Kittrick turned to the girls. "It's getting late, and my friend has just got a bride, a new one, and it's foreign fashion always to come home before midnight during the first six weeks after marriage. My friend always does that with all his brides."

"Really?" Had he told them that Kent has as many wives as Solomon they would have believed it. The customs of foreigners were peculiar; they might do anything. "How many has he?"

Kent counted his fingers. "Six, yes, six or maybe seven. So you see it's time to go home."

"Bad man, that's not good to have so many wives; one, and possibly a *mekake*, concubine, but one only is better." The small doll face was very serious, a little

shocked. So she had a code of morals, after all. "But you're not angry?" The tone was solicitous, frightened. "Have I not pleased you?"

"You poor little thing." He fished out a ten yen note, grasped both her hands and slipped the bill between them. "See, that's for you. Go and buy another doll, a foreign doll, and when you play with it, you can think of me. It's a souvenir."

She came up to him, placed both her arms about his neck, raised herself on her toes and pressed her warm, whitened cheek against his. "How good you are. Are all foreigners like that? I wish you were not going. It's too bad you have so many wives."

"I expect we had better go and say good-by to Nishimura," remarked Kittrick. The girls led them to the room, but he was dead to the world, snoring noisily, sprawling, arms outstretched over the disordered *futon*, the woman sitting beside him, patiently stirring a fan. The girls took them to the entrance. The streets were no longer crowded, but a few stragglers gathered and watched them curiously as they sat there, in full view, lacing their shoes. Of course, one knew what was in their minds. The embarrassment of the situation was the finishing touch.

"Whew, I'm glad to get out of this." In the silence of the deserted street, dim now and drab, as the brilliance of the lights had given way to a faint glimmer, the only sounds were their footsteps and, in a distance, the clamor of a watchman's clappers. Kent was ill at ease and wanted to get away from these great, quiet houses, from the sense of knowledge of the sordidness, of the lives of all these women stirring fitfully behind these walls. A policeman obligingly found them an automobile and they started home.

"Well, what do you think of it, Kent?"



"I am mainly disgusted, old man, still, I am just now too confused by clashing impressions to know just what to think. I feel so damned sorry for these women, and yet, oddly enough, that little girl of mine was not particularly unhappy. The shame and the hideousness of it all passed right by her. She might have been far more unhappy in a spinning mill. In a few years she'll pass out of it, marry, and forget all about it. But, of course, there must be others, girls who are fine-souled enough to suffer from the constant degradation that is offered them day after day, every day. The whole damned thing ought to be abolished."

"Yes, that's one side of it," said Kittrick. "Sometimes I'm inclined to agree with you; but then again, at other times I'm not. It's the old question of regulation or no regulation, and it is still an open one. At home we have taken the other tack, but I wonder if we're much better off. You know San Francisco, where you may go out any night and pick up girls, just like these, not held in such bondage perhaps, but, on the other hand, furtive, frightened poor devils who are no better off, who have not even the sense of security that the girls have here. We hear of Piccadilly and Leicester Square. The trouble is that as long as men, or at least a great many men, are what they are, women will be sacrificed. The question is the same here as elsewhere; there's something to be said on both sides. It's rotten either way. I've never been able quite to make up my mind which is best, or worst. But, here in Japan, there is at least one thing in their favor, and that's the marvelous way in which the Japanese manage to place a veneer of artistry, of beauty, externally anyway, over this thing. Of course, we have our opulently gorgeous palaces of sin and all that, but they seem flaunting and garish when compared

with Japan, where even in this they manage to convey a surface of estheticism, delicate beauty, cleanness, with their spotless rooms, fairy gardens and the rest. It is reflected even in these girls who seldom show the loose sensuousness, the brazen, commercial harlotry of our women of that class. And one thing is certain, these girls here in the case of the lower classes, and the geisha in that of the more well-to-do, have served to preserve the purity of the Japanese married woman. It's the existence of the Yoshiwara and the *machiai* that turns the Japanese philanderer away from the other man's wife. And seeing the tangles and triangles of our cities, the rotten divorce cases, and knowing that the Japanese family, the unsullied virtue of the matron, is the corner-stone of the Japanese Empire, I'm hanged if I can't at least understand the reluctance of the Japanese in tackling this matter, disgusting and tragic as it is."

It was after midnight when he reached the house, but Jun-san was waiting for him. She never retired to her own little house in the garden until the men were safely home.

"You are late, Kent-san." She smiled, stepped closer, peered at him. "Ah, so you have found one at last. The other night it was a rose, and now — So she is Japanese." The smile left her face. "Kent-san," she took his hand in her earnestness, "Kent-san, it is so seldom that happiness comes from this, a foreign man and a Japanese girl, but, if you must go on, be kind to her, please."

She slipped away. He shivered a little. Poor girl; it was distressing, this air of tragedy which always seemed to cling like a shadow to this beautiful, lovable woman, uncomplaining, with her soft dark eyes. He could envy Karsten to have the love of a woman like that. He felt lonely. Life was drab, tedious, selfish,

Would he ever gain such love from some woman. So Jun-san thought he was traveling on that road. The rose, yes, but what could she have seen to-night? Women were always like that, even Jun-san, ever imagining.

He went to his room, began to undress. A glimpse in the mirror made him look more closely, — a white smudge on his cheek. Ah, that was it, a smear of *o shiroi*, powder from the cheek of the Yoshiwara girl. He wiped it away hurriedly. Damn it, if he should enter into love relations with some Japanese girl, it would not be one like that. The thought of Adachi-san came to him. Yes, a girl such as she; still, his mind insisted, this was not the sort of relation he wished to enter into with her. And if, after all, he did, what would come of it, how would it end? He thought of Jun-san's words, "so seldom happiness comes from this." How devilishly complicated life was, a Scylla or Charybdis; did one steer clear of one rock one banged into the other. He turned off the light impatiently and climbed into bed, but thoughts would not leave him, the oppressive, stifling atmosphere of sorrow which lay broodingly over the household — why could not happiness come from a relationship like this?

## CHAPTER XV

With the approach of Saturday Kent became impatient. The feeling of being alone, that there was in the whole world no one who was really interested in his affairs, who cared whether he lived or died, took hold of him and he chafed under a desire for some one who would care, for the close touch, the intimate relationship which is possible only between man and woman. That was what he wished from Adachi-san. He thought it out carefully, made certain that he would eschew all semblance of dalliance. Jun-san was right, what could such lead to but sorrow, heartbreak. But he wanted her friendship, a sort of brother and sister relationship. Even though it was common to scoff at platonic intimacy, such must be possible, and in this case, with the definite absence of passion, erotic desire, it surely must be possible if ever. So it should be thus; he would regard her as a fair flower, attaining his enjoyment from being near her, allowing himself to be suffused by the effulgence of her beauty, disdaining to break the charm of purity and delicacy by soiling contact of too ardent hands.

As he awaited her, in the wistaria arbor by the fountain, he enjoyed a feeling of serenity, of having laid out a wise and safe course, one which would avoid the anguish and regrets of love passion. As he noticed her at a distance, hurrying towards him, dainty, picturelike under her brightly hued parasol, he became elated with a feeling of gratification, pride, that this beautiful, winsome girl, the equal of whom one did

not see in weeks or months, should be thus hastening to him.

She was in a gay mood. "You know, Kent-san, it's the first time I ever had a meeting with a man like this. And still I know that it's right for a man and a woman to meet thus, if they ——"

"If they what?"

"Never mind," she laughed, a little confused. "Where do you wish to go, Kent-san?"

He left it to her. She decided on Shiba Park. It suited him admirably. He had hoped that she would select some place like that, typically Japanese. Somehow the surroundings of the former occasion, the strident modernity of the new art, the exaggerated imitation of the Quartier Latin atmosphere by the students, had vitiated the picture which he wanted to form of her. But here, as they wandered slowly under the huge, gnarled cryptomeria trees, among the ancient shrines and sepulchers of the Tokugawa shoguns, with their century-old carvings, hundreds upon hundreds of great stone and brass lanterns, silent halls with woodwork wrought into infinitesimally minute details, myriads of gilt ornaments, fantastic tessellated ceiling squares, one felt oneself brought back into the age of feudalism, peaceful, reverend in the brooding calm which lay over this place. Here she blended into, formed an integral part of the surroundings. The bright colors of her kimono with its great bow-like obi-girdle arrangement, her clear, refined Japanese features seeming to supply the last touch of artistry which infused this gorgeous medieval setting with the vitalizing breath of life.

And her thoughts came into harmony with it all. Modernism faded away; she told him the old histories connected with these shrines, imaginative, picturesque; quoted the ancient proverbs, bits of softly cadenced

poetry. This was how he wanted her to be; how marvelously she contrived to translate into living reality the indefinitely glimpsed dream of his imagination. He became immersed in well-being, absolutely complete, delicious pleasure. They dined at a Japanese tea house facing a garden, another perfect composition where nature had been persuaded rather than compelled to arrange the components, fine traceries of maple leaves, broad, flat stones in a winding pathway down to a tranquil bit of water, forming together the perfect picture where no ill-placed pebble or broken twig might intrude on harmony.

During the days which followed he enjoyed a sense of elation, triumph that his dream had at last come true, the ideal attained. This was perfection, just as he wanted it all, the girl herself to be. With this he could be fully happy, content. Sitting in his office, smoking idle, he found pleasure in living over in his mind every incident, every detail of this delectable adventure.

"Telephone call for you, Mr. Kent."

He roused himself, irritated. Hang the telephone and all modern contrivances which mankind had worked out painfully to plague it.

"Hello, hello, who's that?" he inquired briskly.

"Is that you, Kent-san?" By the gods, it was she. He felt as if he must be trembling visibly in his eagerness. "Yes, yes, this is Kent-san."

"I thought you might care to come over for some tea." He could hear her laughter. These prosaic wires had their excellent uses, after all. "Yes, thank you, of course, I'll come right over."

As he scrambled up the stairs he noticed that the offices were deserted; the promoters of Japanese-Bolivian harmony and the rest had left early, apparently. She received him, smiling mischievously. "I

am so sorry to have disturbed you, but every one goes home so early here, and I felt a little lonesome. So we shall have tea."

After that he came often, in the late afternoon, and chatted with her about the events of the day, the modern music, art, pictures, or, again, about old Japan, the ancient fables, beliefs, poetry, as her mood would have it. It seemed as if she possessed two distinct and complete personalities, one the quaint, conventional, yet emotional maiden of old Japan, the other the eager, nervous young intellectual, thirsty for knowledge, for attaining progress. They became very intimate. He learned that her first name was Sadako, so after that he called her that only, and she came to call him Hugh, — Heeyu she pronounced it. They made short trips Sundays, into the country, to Kamakura, Inagi, up the Sumida River, to temple festivals and street fairs. Thus it remained. At times he might hold her hand, simply, like that of a child, but that was as far as it went, as far as he craved to go. He had attained the fulfillment of his desire for constant enjoyment of her charm, her beauty, her companionship, intimate, serene, undisturbed by desire to go further.

One Sunday they made an early start and went farther afield, to the Hakone region. At Miyanoshita they left the little electric train, and lunched Japanese fashion at the Goldfish Inn. Then they wandered on down, along the road winding between the steeply sloping mountain sides, drinking in the coolness, enjoying the sweep of green bamboo and maple trees clinging to the rocky walls above them, the murmur and gurgle of the stream rushing, foaming, over great boulders far below.

At Tonegawa where they went to the station to take the train back to Tokyo, they found a group of ex-

cited people on the platform. They were talking, gesticulating, children with arms filled with wooden trick boxes and other souvenirs regarding curiously their agitated elders. The station master was telling his story over and over again, repeating it to every new arrival, arguing and explaining. Yes, they might go to Odawara in the electric train, of course, but there was no way of going beyond that, to Tokyo. The steam trains were not running. Yes, they had stopped; they had all stopped. The entire Imperial Railways system had stopped. It was a strike, a universal strike. No, he knew very well that that had never happened in Japan before; but it had happened now, just as it had in America and England. He couldn't help it. They could go to Odawara for all he cared, but there was scant hotel accommodation to be had there. They had better stay in Hakone where there were many hotels. Yes, the trains were not running — he began to explain again to some newcomers — there was no getting back to Tokyo at present.

"Well, evidently we are in for it, Sadako-san. The man is right. We had better find some place here. I have heard there are good hotels in this village." She had placed her hand on his arm, seemed irresolute, frightened. "You are not afraid, are you, Sadako-san?"

"No, I'm not afraid of you. Come, let us go."

They found an inn in Tonegawa, a huge building with great wings, many-storied, striving up the hillside, seeming, like the trees, to cling precariously thereto. The inn people were a little doubtful. Yes, no. They had only one room left and that was really not a room at all; it was a banquet hall, not used for sleeping. The other hotels? No, they were crowded, too, with the unexpected rush of holiday seekers left stranded here. Yes, he might have the big room.



Other refugees were approaching down the road. Kent made up his mind. "*Shikataganai*, Sadako-san, we must make the best of it. All right, I'll take it."

A maid servant led them through long passages, up steps, along a long passage, up more steps, then through more corridors and stairways, ever upwards, bewilderingly; it seemed as if they must be mounting into the clouds. Finally he noticed overhanging eaves; thank God, this must be the top story; they could mount no higher. The girl led them down a passage, drew aside *shoji*, ushered them into a vast room occupying the entire width of the building, showing a great *tokonoma* recess with a splendid scroll picture, a bronze statuette of Ebisu, the fattest and jolliest of the Seven Lucky Gods, grinning them welcome. There were great gilded screens, several huge mother-of-pearl inlaid *hibachi*. Quite evidently this was a hall for special feasts.

The maid brought tea and comfortable kimono. "The bath?" she inquired. This was a hot-spring hotel, sought by people from all over Japan for its natural hot mineral water. "I shall get dinner ready while you are in the bath," she added, evidently with the thought that this foreigner might not know the common custom.

"I want to arrange my hair first. There is no mirror here." Sadako was already in the doorway. "Please excuse me a moment."

She disappeared. He waited, not knowing just what to do. It was embarrassing, this bath suggestion. The maid became impatient. "Will you not take your bath now?" she insisted. Very well, he would solve the difficulty by going first. He got out of his clothes and into the kimono. The maid led him down through the maze of corridors, miles it seemed, to the ground floor, into a hall-like space, with shelves

for clothing, where were standing half a dozen persons, men and women, half nude or nude, getting ready for or leaving the baths. He turned to the servant. "Where?"

"Oh, anywhere," she indicated a row of doors. "There are three baths, but they are all full. It is no use to wait. There are so many guests that there will be no empty rooms. Please enter." She was in a hurry, began to untie his girdle. It was embarrassing. In other inns where he had been, the rule separating the sexes had been observed. Still, they all seemed so unconcerned; he must do in Japan as the Japanese do.

He doffed his kimono and placed it on a shelf. The maid held open a door. As he started to enter some one from inside was about to pass out. He stood aside; a young matron, about thirty, and two little girls, all absolutely nude. He noted curiously that in his surprise there was no hint of being shocked, they were so natural, without hint of embarrassment. Came to him instead an odd sense of purity; the impression was like that of a graceful doe with a couple of fawns, nothing more.

The room was spacious; three sides were of finely grained wood, the fourth wall being the natural hillside with small shrubs growing in the interstices among the mossy rocks whence jetted the hot spring water, effervescent, into a rill in the immaculate tile floor leading to the tank, a huge thing, about three feet deep, filled with crystal-clear water. The room was so large that there was not even the veil of steam which usually half obscures the bathers in such places. On the floor close to him were a couple of Japanese men, rubbing themselves with towels, preparing to leave. A little farther over were three women, two very young, rinsing from their bodies the soap which

covered them with a creamy foam; the third, a little older, was having her back rubbed by the old bath-man.

Kent took a wooden bucket and dipped water from the tank, poured it over himself, found a diminutive wooden stool and sat down to soap himself. The men left and he was alone with the women. They paid no attention to him, ignored his presence altogether. What a graceful picture they made, holding high the small buckets whence they poured streams of the sparkling water over their smooth, slender bodies, ivory-gleaming, creamy, almost white. The bath-man poured water over the oldest girl, and all three climbed into the tank. Then he turned to Kent and began to massage his back. The girls were chatting gayly. He wished they would have finished before time came for him to enter the tank. But the bath-man had completed the rubbing; now he was sousing him with clean water. "Please, danna-san, step in. This water is very healthful."

There was nothing for it. He went to the edge. The girls regarded him disinterestedly. "Please, excuse me." He noted surprise in their glances; evidently apology had been superfluous, out of the ordinary. They said nothing. He started to climb in hurriedly, to hide his embarrassment, but drew back with an exclamation. The water was much hotter than he had expected. One of the two younger girls tittered, tried to control herself, but failed. The other became infected by it, tittered also uncontrollably; from giggles they went into laughter, grasped each other's hands, bodies shaking, sending ripples scurrying over the mirror-like surface.

"Oh, do keep quiet," the older girl managed to repress a smile. "Please, don't mind them. They're very rude, but they are so young. Anyway," she

added, "you should come into the water quickly; then you don't feel the heat so much."

"Thank you very much." He plumped in. It was not so bad, after all. "It is hotter than any place I have ever been before," he explained, ashamed at having flinched.

"Yes, it is hotter here than in most places," said the girl. "So you live in Japan?"

One remark led to another. The younger girls joined in. Soon they were conversing freely, Hakone, the weather, and particularly the news of the strike, the great event of the day. As they sat there, letting the heat from the water seep into their bodies, an undercurrent of thought kept running through his mind, minutely probing analysis into his own thoughts, his impressions from this astonishing situation. Yes, here he was, with these three young women, side by side almost, immersed in this water which offered no more concealment than glass, and yet his sense of embarrassment was leaving him, had left him; even the feeling of unconventionality disappeared. He felt no different than he might have, had he been sitting with them, fully clothed, in a café. Curiously, there was not even hint of suggestive thought, erotic inspiration. The utter absence thereof puzzled him a little. Men might experience such at the fashionable seashores of America where female beauty chose to adorn itself with wetly clinging textures, boldly cut garments, designedly piquant, stirring curiosity with artfully contrived faintness of concealment — while here the very absence of suggestion, of thought on the part of these women of the man-woman idea, produced an effect of naturalness, purity even; one would feel ashamed of harboring fancies of sensuality. And yet these girls — they were quite evidently gentlewomen — would have blushed in shame should they, when on

the street or any place other than the bath, suffer accidental exposure of even the slightest bit of bosom; they would disdain being seen in the daringly cut evening gown of Western fashion. In the bath this was natural, obvious; one did not bathe in clothes; this was evidently the idea.

They climbed out and prepared to leave. He watched them, as they stood erect or knelt in easy, graceful attitudes, as he might have looked at a picture. He was pleased that he had grasped the idea, the Japanese attitude of mind, that a man might look at a woman, unclothed, without taint of thought of sex.

"*Sayonara.*" The girls smiled to him. An elderly couple came in. He climbed out, dried himself and passed out into the hall, donned his kimono and started back for the room. He mounted a flight of stairs, went down a corridor, climbed more stairs, occupied with his thought of the incident in the bath. Presently he faced a storeroom filled with great heaps of quilts. He tried to retrace his steps, but wandered into another part of the house which was unknown to him. Lost again, another labyrinth. He would inquire; but he did not even know the number of his room. The servants were all busy elsewhere. He asked a couple of young men who passed to show him to the top floor. They laughed at his predicament and undertook to guide him, but the floor they finally reached was as unknown to him as the rest had been. As they wandered along the corridors they could look into many rooms where withdrawn partitions showed each its separate little scene, parents with children, young couples, large families, groups of students, all eating, drinking, discussing the strike or their own more intimate affairs. Here and there the two young men would make inquiry, explaining the contretemps. It

excited merriment. Others joined the search, became lost in their turn, pointing out directions, finding themselves baffled; still more joined the fun. It became a procession of young fellows and girls, highly amused, laughing, thoroughly enjoying the childish adventure. How likable they were, lovable in their ingenuousness; no hint here of racial antipathies. They took him in as one of themselves in this fine game which had happened so fortuitously to beguile the time. Kent came to enter into the spirit of the thing, the infectious spirit of hilarity, with the assurance that they were laughing with him, not at him; that they were all friends. He was almost disappointed when a maid who knew where he belonged came to his rescue and led him back amid laughing calls of "good luck" and "*go yukkuri nasai*," "don't be in a hurry to leave," from his host of new friends.

A few moments later Sadako-san returned to the room. "So you have bathed too, Kent-san?"

"Why, yes; and why did you give me the slip like that?"

"Oh, I knew that it would be like that, with so many people here, bathing together. Certainly, I did not want to bathe with you."

"But when you bathed, did you not bathe with men?"

"Of course, but that — that's different."

"Because I'm a foreigner?" He was pleased enough that matters had turned out as they had. Somehow, he felt, with her he should have experienced a shyness and uneasiness, such as had not occurred with the girls who were unknown to him; that it would in some odd, intangible way have vitiated the state of purity of intimacy which he wanted to maintain with her. But the suggestion that she, Sadako-san, should feel the race difference, especially when these others

had not thought thereof, irritated him. "Just because I'm a foreigner?" he repeated.

She came close to him, took his face between her slim, small hands, looked at him intently, reprovingly. "Hugh-san, you know that between you and me that doesn't matter. These other men, I didn't know them, but with you," she blushed furiously, "with you, I couldn't. Can't you see? It's because you're a man you are so stupid. If you were a woman, you'd understand."

In his turn he brought his hands to her cheeks, brought her face close to his, looked deeply into these great, darkly luminous eyes which had ever held such a fascination for him. He sensed a thrill pass through him, delicious, suffusing his entire being. No; he caught himself. This wouldn't do; he was slipping into dangerous waters. "Sadako-san," he said, holding control in his voice, "I understand, even if I am a man, and—you're a dear girl." But still they held each other. He felt a shivering, gasping tenseness, nervous, electrical, as if the next instant must bring some new, astounding, overwhelming development.

Patter of feet in the corridor. They sprang apart, faced each other embarrassed, in reaction of surprise at the nearness of love to which their feelings had so unexpectedly brought them. The maid brought supper. It was necessary to make an effort to appear natural, to get back to the commonplace. The presence of the servant, unsuspecting, business-like, arranging the table, helped them. They seated themselves on their cushions, self-consciousness fell away; soon they were chatting as if nothing had taken place.

Darkness had fallen. The lights were lit. The maid brought in huge bundles of *futon* and arranged beds, great heaps of wadded quilts on the floor, side by side. Evidently these two were man and wife, or

sweethearts; it was all the same to her. Sadako-san went out on the narrow veranda, sat with her back turned to the room. The maid made the finishing touches. "Good-night, *o yasumi nasai.*" She left the room, closed the *shoji*, the patter of her feet faded away down the hallway.

Kent went out to Sadako-san. She was squatting on the floor, head resting against the low rail, staring abstractedly out over the scattered roofs below, towards the hillside over which was rising a white crescent moon, faintly silvering the trees along the ridges. "Sadako-san." She gave no answer. Far down below the stream was murmuring; cicada violins shrilled a quavering treble serenade. "Sadako-san," he took her hand, drew her towards him, placed his arm about her, brought her close, held her tightly. She offered no resistance, her gaze directed fixedly, dreamily, into the distance, sadly. The poor, dear, lovely girl. Suddenly all idea of abstaining from caresses, from love, seemed distant, a thing utterly of the past. As he felt the pulsating warmth of her body, sensed the beating of her heart, the heaving of her bosom, the implied consent of her inertness, that old thought of avoiding love seemed stupid, absurdly futile. She was beautiful, lovable; they were young, what was life for? He loved her. He turned her face towards his own. Slowly, looking steadily, deeply into her eyes, he brought it close. Then he kissed her. They clung lips to lips. Her arms went about his neck. The murmur of the stream and the cicada violins faded into an indefinite, soft, distant obligato.

"Sadako-san, I love you."

Slowly she drew her face from his, eyes wide as if in surprise, fear. Suddenly she threw his hands from her, held out her own against him, stared at him, lips parted. "Hugh-san, oh, Hugh-san, why did



you do it?" Her hands grasped the rail and she buried her face on her arms. He could hear her sobbing. With gentle hands he tried to soothe her, but the mere touch caused her to tremble convulsively, it seemed almost hysterically. "Sadako-san, Sadako-san." He spoke soothingly as he might have done to a frightened child. Gradually the sobbing ceased, the nervous tenseness of her body gave way to passive inertness. He contrived to place his arm about her. "And now, Sadako-san, little girl, don't be frightened of me. I shan't hurt you, or kiss you, or do anything you don't wish me to do. But don't you understand that I love you? Don't you care for me at all?"

"Hugh-san, I know you are good. I am not afraid of you. I'd do anything you want, but — I can't. It's impossible, oh, oh, Hugh-san." He could see tears tremble on long, black lashes, enhancing the depth, the luster of these dark eyes, the quality that had so overcome him when he first saw her. Beautiful, unhappy, wholly adorable. "Sadako-san, of course, it is not impossible. Dearest, I want to marry you."

But she shook her head, kept shaking it, rocked her whole body. Again he soothed her, brought her cheek up against his. "Sadako-san, little girl, what is the matter? Tell me, dear, only tell me." Presently she straightened, took his arm from her waist, grasped both his hands, held them, looked straight at him. "All right, Hugh-san, I shall tell you all, all about myself. Then you'll understand.

"While I was still small, my mother died, and my father didn't marry again; he didn't want me to have a stepmother. Oh, he was a good man, my father. He was a professor in the Imperial University, in political economy, and all he lived for was to make me wise and good. I went to a good school and he taught me much himself, many things that he did not dare

teach his classes, showing me how Japan is being corrupted by the money evil, the big capitalist houses that are gradually sucking into themselves all the money, all the treasures, all the happiness of Japan; and the narikins, the new profiteers, who are like jackals that take what the lions leave, so there's nothing at all left for the people. He told me that all that was good, all that was fine and noble about old Japan was being thrust out of the way by the money worshipers; the samurai, the Bushido code, the splendid old courtesy and customs, all were being sacrificed that these people might make money, by any means, fair or foul, by corrupting the government and by grinding down the common people. He told me so much about it because he dared not talk to others. He was afraid he might lose his position or even go to jail for harboring 'dangerous thoughts.' For himself he wouldn't have minded that, but he was saving up money for my education, for he wanted me to go to the big universities in America and Europe, and every month he went down to Yokohama and put money in the Machi Bank. I didn't care much about these things then, politics, economics; I wanted to be a doctor; but later I remembered everything he had said.

"Then came the big crash in business and Machi failed. We lost all we had; so did the other poor depositors. No one would do anything for us; the rich men and the other banks were all sorry for Machi, who had lost so many millions. But he still has his automobiles and his villa at Hayama — and we had nothing. My father had been failing for some time before that. Then he died. I am sure that disappointment killed my father."

Her voice died away in a whisper. She fell silent, looked out over the valley, absorbed in her memories. So she was another of the victims of the Machi failure.

He had reason to remember the incident well. The Machi Bank had been the first big concern to tumble in the crash, and in working up the story he had learned his first astounding lesson in Japanese high finance. Out of his bank's assets of some seventy million yen, Machi had invested sixty millions in his own silk and menthol speculations, and had lost it all. The very point made by Sadako-san, the wave of sympathy for Machi on the part of the rest of the plutocrats, the absolute unconcern regarding the depositors, had caused him to wonder. He had interviewed one of Japan's leading financial authorities, a high official in the Treasury Department, about it. But it had been very unsatisfactory. Why, hadn't Machi lost all his capital, millions and millions? Of course, one must be sorry for him.

"Then Machi is lucky that he's in Japan," Kent had said. "If he had been in America, he would be in jail now." But the official had refused to believe it. Why? Had followed a long discussion. Had they then no laws whereby bankers were prevented from gambling with funds placed in their care? The official had plainly thought that Kent was childish in his ignorance of high finance. Did he not understand then that bankers had to invest the funds entrusted to them; that was the very essence of banking. But was there then nothing to prevent a Japanese banker from investing the funds in his charge in a poker game or in roulette, if he so pleased? No, naturally the Japanese Government did not wish to limit its financiers in the exercise of their talents. And, anyway, of course, the bankers did not put the money in poker games? No, possibly not, but what about Machi? As a gamble, poker became a child's game as compared with silk and menthol. The great authority had shown signs of impatience; anyway, poker was gambling and silk

was business; every one knew that, and, of course, there was always a certain element of chance in business. Kent had tried once more. "But now that you have the example of the Machi case before you, with more like that almost certain to come, don't you think it would be well to regulate such business by law? What do you trust to, anyway?" No, the Japanese laws were quite satisfactory, quite, and the authority had drawn himself up with great dignity. "We trust," he had said solemnly, "we trust in the integrity of our bankers."

Kent had picked up his hat and had left. What was the use? Could you beat it? Here Machi had gambled away sixty millions, and still they babbled inanely about trusting in the integrity of such. At the time he had felt intense sympathy with the victims, unknown to him, orphans, widows, old men doubtless, — and now here he saw at first-hand one of the countless little tragedies left in the wake of Japanese high finance indiscretion. So she really had good reason for her peculiar aversion to the plutocracy, poor little girl. He leaned forward, intercepted her glance. "And then?"

"Then," she shrugged her shoulders. He hated to see the bitter smile on these childishly curved lips. "Then I had no father, and I had no money, all because Mr. Machi had wanted to take a gambler's chance to increase his millions. But he kept his motor and his villa, and we, whose money he had used, we kept nothing. Then I remembered what my father had so often told me, and then I decided that I would do what I could to help the poor against the rich, to do my share to put an end to a government which allows such things, that cares only for the plutocrats. So I got a job in a silk filature. I might have done better, of course, but I wanted to see first what the life of

the workers was like, and I had no money, anyway, so it made no difference.

"I thought I would begin cautiously; so I found a position in one of the Ohara 'model mills.' I thought I was lucky. Of course, I didn't like the looks of the high board fence that surrounded the whole place and made it appear like a prison; and it was a prison, too, I soon found out. They never let us out except on what they called 'excursions' and then there were always guards with us. They made a great fuss about these excursions, but the fact is that most of us stayed home to sleep—we could never get enough sleep—and then they scolded us and said we were lazy and ungrateful. It was the same way with the flower garden and the tennis courts that they were always showing visitors—for it was a model factory, you remember. It is true, we had the right to use them, but we almost never did; we were too tired, we never had the time. We wanted to sleep, just rest.

"There were hundreds of girls in the factory, most of them young, who had come there because they had been shown pictures of these fine flower gardens and tennis courts and thought they would have a much nicer time than they had on the farms or in the tenements where they came from. I worked in a room with over a hundred girls, taking the silk from the cocoons from the boiling water in great big kettles and winding it on machines. We couldn't sit down and we couldn't speak or hear others speak. We couldn't even look up from our task. The boiling kettles made the heat almost unbearable and the stench from the pupæ was nauseating. My head ached most of the time, and we had to work from four in the morning until seven at night. Of course, I always wanted to sleep, and I was lucky that it was a model factory, for the dormitory was clean, even though there were

sixteen of us in each room; and we were allowed a full *tatami*, a mat six by three, you know, each. But even there the *futon* were thin and hard like boards. There had been sheets once, some of the older girls said, but some had been stolen by girls leaving the factory, so they had done away with sheets.

"I became just like an animal, only thinking of time to rest. I had heard how in other factories the girls sometimes got better conditions by banding together or by complaining. In one of the textile mills the girls composed a song about the hem of the silk crepe shift of Mrs. Ohara being dyed crimson with blood from working girls' fingers, and I thought I would like to make up songs like that, do something to bring the girls together, but I was too weak to think. Sometimes I was afraid I might get consumption, as so many of the working girls do, but if we were sick, they only scolded us and said we were shamming. I was sorry I had come there, but I couldn't get away till my time was up. That's what the fence was for. The food was poor, but I didn't mind that so much, for poor food costs very little, and I had decided to save my money so when I got out I might go to typewriter school."

Again she paused. She was looking straight at Kent; he could almost feel her gaze, as were she trying to look into his mind, appraising him.

"You poor, dear girl," he tried to draw her closer. The thought of that frail, sweet beauty being cooped up in that steaming hell that she had depicted incensed him, made him want to take her in his arms and hold her, protect her, comfort her. But she waved him aside impatiently.

"Hugh-san, don't caress me. I am going to tell you something I have never told any one, and then, Hugh-san, you'll understand why you and I can never

be more than this, just friends. Maybe you won't want to be even that then, but I'm going to tell you." There was an uncanny high pitch of excitement in her voice. She was becoming overwrought, possibly a little hysterical. He tried to quiet her. "No, Sadako-san, don't think of these things. They are all over now. I don't want to hear any more about all that. I shall take care of you and protect you."

"But you must hear." He could feel the small hands lying in his clench tightly as she fought for self-control. She looked straight into his eyes. "In that factory the Oharas themselves never came, but they had a banto, a young clerk, who came often to look after the business. Once when I was so sick that I had not been able to drag myself to work, he inspected the dormitory and found me alone there. He was very kind. We talked and we became very friendly. He said he felt sorry for me, that I was different from the other girls and that he would get me better work. And he did. I got a job in the office, and gradually things became better with me. I saw him often then; and, Hugh-san," by an effort of will she was keeping her gaze straight into his, "I came to think that I loved him."

"Then one night, it was fine moonlight, and I walked out into the garden. My work was not so hard, and I didn't have to think of sleep always. There had been a little party over at the head overseer's house, and that man, the man I'm telling you about, came back from there, through the garden. He saw me. He had been drinking sake, but he was not drunk, and I was always glad to see him, and I ran up to him. But he just took me in his arms roughly, and pulled me over into the shadow and forced me down on the ground, and — oh, Hugh-san ——" Her eyes wavered, fell. She threw herself forward, on his

shoulder, voice half-smothered, sobbing. "And I had really loved him. There in that horrible factory, he had been good to me, and had helped me, and he was the only one in the world who cared for me, and — and I think that if he had only held me gently, and spoken softly to me and loved me, — yes, Hugh-san, I think I should have done anything he wanted. But now I hated him, even more than I would have hated any other man, and I shall always hate him.

"And that's one more reason why I shall always hate capital and its men, and that's why I have made friends with those who feel like I do, the Socialists, the Communists and all those, the young men in Tokyo, the labor leaders, the anti-militarists. That's why I finally managed to get into Viscount Kikuchi's office, so I might learn all I could about what they are doing, the bureaucrats and the plutocrats — and, Hugh-san, that's the reason that I can't love you."

"But why, dear girl, why?" He gathered her into his arms. She did not resist, yet he sensed in her body a sort of stiffness, coldness; the flood tide of ecstatic emotion had passed. "But, Sadako-san, why should you waste your future, why place your back on happiness because your past has been wretched? Don't you care for me at all? Couldn't you love me just a little if you tried?"

She raised her head, smiled up to him wistfully. "Yes, I think I could love you, Hugh-san. But I'm not going to. I won't try. Can't you see how impossible it is. I'm unclean. I'm soiled. Do you think that I should want to come to you like that?"

He started to answer, but she placed a hand over his mouth. "Please, Hugh-san, don't talk. Just let us sit like this; yes, hold me, just a little while." She nestled close up to him, like a tired child, and he held her, wondering at the unexpected and strange per-



versities of women in matters of love, the impossibility of foreseeing or refuting the baffling obliquities of their reasoning. In old Japan such a mishap might have been looked upon with the merciful eye of tolerance; and in new Japan, the complaint of teachers in even the highest girl schools was that the maidens were babbling sophisticatedly of free love and the like. These young Japanese obtained their ideas from the oddest corners of Western modes of thought, from chance-bought or borrowed books, taking for gospel whatever they happened to absorb, be it from long antiquated volumes picked up in a Kanda second-hand bookshop or from the misconstrued conceptions of Western philosophy casually heard from these fanatic professors and students. But where could she have gotten this absurd idea that she was soiled, that her value, that wondrous gift of beauty and charm, had been vitiated, rendered utterly worthless, like that? At last he asked her, "Sadako-san, how did you get such a foolish idea like that? Of course, you're good, and sweet, and pure, and beautiful. You must never think of yourself as soiled, unclean; it's unhealthy, absurd. Of course, you don't believe such nonsense."

She answered, a little wearily. "But, of course, I do know, and you know. I am a Christian."

He almost shook her. "Of all the foolish things! Who ever taught you Christianity like that?" He tried to argue with her, became voluble. He was not familiar with intricacies of doctrine, but surely this was a ridiculously antiquated interpretation of the spirit of Christianity of to-day, absurd, monstrous. He became voluble, tried to break down or persuade. And, anyway, what was really Christianity to her? He knew very well that many of the Japanese Christians were so merely because it was *haikara*, modern, placed them a little aside from the mob in the rôle of independent,

advanced thinkers. But why should she be like the rest of the shallow fools?

"Yes, I know what you say is true. There are many Christians like that. Even my father, who first taught me Christianity, was like that. I know he really had more confidence in *Nichiren*. But, Hugh-san, I am so tired. I want to rest. Go in and sleep. I shall sleep here."

The recollection of the two beds in there, side by side, suggestively, brought his mind to the problem of the moment. "Of course not, dearest. Go in and rest. I can sleep out here." But she would not have that. Both grew insistent. It seemed an impasse. Finally he went in and dragged the two beds apart, one to each end of the long room. Around hers, designated by the curved wooden headrest designed to support woman's elaborate coiffure, he built a rampart with the screens.

"And now, Sadako-san, here is a place for you. Can't you trust me?"

She came up to him. "Of course, I trust you." She raised herself on her toes, placed her hands to his head, pressed her cheek against his, warm, soft. He moved his arms to clasp her, but she slipped away, disappeared. He could hear the dropping of her garments to the *tatami* beyond the barrier of screens.

When he awoke sunlight was filtering in through the paper *shoji*. He called, "Sadako-san," but there was no answer. He went over to the screens which guarded her, knocked, called again, but she had gone. Evidently she had taken the opportunity to go to the bath.

He went out on the veranda, seated himself on the rail, back against a post, reflecting. What a rack of emotional storm and stress had suddenly swept upon them, engulfing them, unexpectedly, whirling them

about like straws in a typhoon. So that had been the result of his carefully planned pure, passion-free relationship; how little man might control such things. And he had asked her to marry him. Jun-san's words came to him. What if she had consented? He would then have been tied to her now, for life. For life, with this Japanese girl! Would happiness have come of it, not merely the swirling high tide of youthful passion of the first years, but during the long years, decades, when constant living together would reduce existence to the humdrum of every day. He tried to imagine the situation a score of years hence, when she would be over forty, when the glamor of youth, the sparkle of newness, the exotic charm of kimono and strange ornaments should have passed away, when her mode of thought would no longer be fresh and original to him, but when the oddness of her ideas would have become stale, irritating even. They might at such time be living in San Francisco, or New York, or London; he did not intend to live the rest of his life in Japan. How would life in such places be for them, an elderly-aged American and a middle-aged Japanese woman? Marriage must have a firmer foundation to build upon than mere attraction of beauty, spell, fascination of exotic charm; to last it must depend on the ingredient of intelligence, common growth of mind, ideals. His first marriage came back into his mind warningly, and even there chances for endurance of the relation had been so much stronger. And yet he did love this girl. Were it not for the appalling thought of the possibility of what coming decades might bring, he would not hesitate. Could he, for instance, be certain that he would live but three, or five years longer, he would have insisted, persuaded, won her by sheer impetuosity of wooing. But—— No, Jun-san was probably right; did he venture to tie himself to this

girl for life, he would be playing a game of chance with fate with the cards probably stacked against him. And still he wanted her, craved for her, would probably be able to overcome her misgivings; but what if he did? Would not come the time when she might recall to him that she had been right, that he had brought only unhappiness to her? No, he must give her up.

"Good-morning, *asanebo-san*, sleepy-head." She had crept up to him playfully, like a child and stood beside him laughing, radiant, with a freshness like a flower from the bath. Not a trace of the soul-stirring emotions of the night before. "Soon we shall have breakfast, and after lunch we shall go back to Tokyo."

"You forget that the trains may not be running then. Have they had any news down below?"

"Oh, it will be only a twenty-four hour strike. That was decided. Of course, they don't know anything, the inn people, but I know." She was enjoying her superiority of knowledge. "That was decided on some time ago, only I didn't know it would come so soon. Don't you know that while workers are allowed to organize unions, the Imperial Railways men are not allowed to form them, because they are Government employees. That's just why we wanted this strike, the first real nation-wide strike, to come from them, just to strike fear into these governing classes, to show them how powerless they really are. So a lot of the most important railroad men, engineers and conductors, all over Japan, wherever we could find them, were organized secretly, and we trusted that when they struck the others would come along, for they are all resentful since the Government cut the freight rates and cut their wages for the benefit of the rich people who own the freight. Of course, the authorities suspected something, but they couldn't find out just what was going to happen and when it was

going to come off. And they will punish a lot of the leaders, no doubt. But let them put them in jail; it will only make us stronger. I'm so glad that this really happened; we thought it would be almost impossible to bring it through."

How intensely he disliked hearing her talk like this. Who the devil were these "we"? Why should this beautiful, slender girl be stirring her white fingers in this mess. These words, the sordid jargon of class passion and hate, seemed so grotesquely incongruous issuing from rose-petal child lips that should have been humming the lilting songs of maidenhood.

"Sadako-san," he could not keep impatience out of his voice, "what the deuce are you doing in this mess, anyway? Such things are not for girls like you. It will bring you only unhappiness. Why don't you drop it?"

"I have told you. Some one must do this work. I have no one who cares for me; and there are many other girls in this, just as in your country where women do their share. Why shouldn't Japanese women be as brave and strong as yours?"

Damn this craze after modernity! He wished Japan had never been opened to the Western civilization, to suffering the pangs of re-birth, the seething flux of reconstruction that sucked so many lives inexorably into the maelstrom.

She noticed his frown. "You are angry with me, Hugh-san. Is it because I didn't tell you about this before?"

"No, I want none of your confidences about all that stuff; I don't want to hear you talk about it." He snapped his fingers impatiently. Hang it all!

"Don't be angry, Hugh-san. I was so afraid that this would happen. I liked you so much. You seemed so honest, and then when I heard the Viscount lying

to you, why, I just couldn't help telling you. I hate all these militaristic plots, their subtle plans, keeping up to the letter of their promise, but preparing all the time, in so many ways, for war, for building up their machine in other ways. And so I told you. I wanted to do anything to help stopping them, to hurt their plans. But then, afterwards, I came to think it over. I'm Japanese, and you're a foreigner. Oh, I trust you, but, after all, had I the right to go against my own people, my own country? Oh, I thought over it so long, and sometimes one thing seemed right and sometimes the other, and I couldn't make up my mind, and I grew afraid; so I decided to say nothing more till I was sure what was right. Now, don't be angry. I do trust you, but ——" From the floor where she was kneeling she reached up, grasped his hands, pulled him down towards her. He sensed the trembling of her tightly clasping fingers, tenseness of her body. She brought her face close to his, eyes intense, staring into his.

"Hugh-san, if you say that it is right, I'll tell you all that I know. Anyway, I am afraid that soon I shall not be able to tell much, for I think that they are watching me, that they will send me from Kikuchi's office. But I don't care," her voice broke. "Oh, Hugh-san, don't be angry with me. I'll tell you everything if only you say that it is right."

Her face had become drawn; the eyes staring into his were bright with luminous tears. It was as if he could feel on himself infection of quivering approach of hysteria. He shook himself together. By the gods, he'd have no more of these high-pitched, feverish scenes with their trembling reactions. He wanted no news at such a cost. The girl, this poor, fanatical flower-like thing, frantic under her visionary obsessions, she was the only thing that mattered now.

He rose, lifted her and carried her high in his arms up and down the length of the great room. "You dear baby," he rocked her back and forth soothingly. "You dear pretty little baby. 'Rock-a-by baby in the tree top.' That's how we sing to naughty little babies in my country." She had struggled a moment when he picked her up, surprised, frightened, but now she lay quiet; the tremble had left her, the flicker of overwrought excitement in her eyes had given place to wonder; her body relaxed, a wistful smile crept over her lips. "But, Hugh-san, I'm not a baby, don't ——"

"Keep quiet, you're only a baby, my baby, cry-baby. Listen, 'When the wind blows, the cradle will rock. When the wind blows, the cradle will fall, and,' " he gave her a great swing, "'down comes baby, cradle and all.'"

He tumbled her into the nest of soft silk *futon*. She lay there, laughing. "Oh, but you are silly, Hugh-san. I had never thought that you could be like that. And what a funny song. Sing me some more like that, and tell me what they mean."

He was overjoyed that the remedy had been so potent. He would have her all right in a jiffy. Out of his almost forgotten store of Mother Goose rimes he conjured the Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe, the Ride a Cock Horse, and others; he remembered the fairy tales which had delighted Kimiko-san and brought them to bear. But she liked the songs best, insisted on his singing an odd potpourri of nursery nonsense transformed into labored Japanese. The maid coming with breakfast found them in high spirits.

After the meal, they went for a walk through the village. There they heard the news; the trains would be running that afternoon. "I told you so," triumphed Sadako-san, but he turned her attention to a bent-backed crone who, he insisted, was the living image of

the Old Woman in the Shoe. He wanted no more of the other. At luncheon they had more nursery entertainment. She was as happy, as eagerly receptive as a young bird stretching out its beak clamorous for ever more food. It was wholly delightful. Why could she not always be like that, this entrancing, absurd girl revolutionist who could be enticed in a moment from Karl Marx to Mother Goose?

They left for Tokyo in the afternoon, but the trains were crowded and there was opportunity for only commonplace talk. From the Tokyo station they walked towards Kanda-bashi. Seriousness had returned to her; she said very little. "Kent-san, you have been very, very good to me. I shall never forget it; and, I shall never forget you. And you won't forget me, will you, not altogether?"

"But what are you talking about, Sadako-san? I shall see you again often, as usual." He took her hand, but she was looking away from him, over her shoulder. She pulled her hand away quickly. He followed her gaze. In the shadow of the buildings on the other side of the street he detected a slinking figure, indefinite, sinister in its stealthy movement.

She turned to him. "So you can see yourself now, Hugh-san. It was just as I thought. That man over there, he has been following me before. I knew this must come sooner or later. No, come on, walk quietly. It can't be helped." They reached the bridge. She took his hand, held it between her slim fingers, gripping it tightly. "Good-by, Hugh-san. You have been too good to me. How I wish — I shall never forget how good you have been. And don't forget me, Hugh-san — dear."

She pressed his hand again, turned, and disappeared in the shadows on the other side of the bridge. From the other sidewalk the dark form of the spy was watch-



ing. The swine! What filthy curs they were, these masters of armies and battleships, to pester and harry a slight, frail thing like this girl! He started for home and turned down a side street. Suddenly he wheeled about. Yes, the fellow was following him, inexpertly, but doggedly. Well, he would show the brute that shadowing a man, a foreigner, was not such an easy game as badgering a girl. Abruptly he stepped into the dark shadow of a narrow alley, waited, fist clenched. What if he were a policeman; of course, trouble might follow, but he would at least give him the drubbing of his life, the swine! He waited, bent forward for assault, strangely elated, expectant. But the minutes passed; he peered out. The fellow was not in sight. Kent stepped out from the alley. No, he had disappeared. He had smelt a rat, the damned coward!

Whew, what a day, and what a night! What a grotesque bedlam this was becoming to be, this Japan in transition that he had begun to pry into, this monstrous anamorphosis where the rare quaintness and daintiness of feudal richness of thought and beauty were anachronistically intermingled with the crass, clamorous ugliness of riotous, strident cry, uneasy, hectic pulsing of dissatisfaction, hating mob thought. And then this girl; she was like a flower ground in the relentless wheels of some gigantic, pitiless machine — and he couldn't drag her out. What a price Japan was paying for her modernism, with the fair, sweet souls of girlhood tattered and wasted as a part of the sacrifice. This, then, was the end of this relationship that he had hoped so much from. The premonition was uncanny, overwhelming; he could not ward it off. This, then, was the end.

## CHAPTER XVI

A few days later he went to Viscount Kikuchi's office. A young fellow occupied the seat at the head of the stairway. "You are new here, aren't you?" Kent ventured. Yes, he had come here only yesterday. Kent tried a few more discreet questions, but the lad was uncommunicative. Still his manner indicated clearly enough that he regarded himself as a permanency. Kent was glad to learn that the Viscount was absent; he would have hated to face those piercing old eyes. It was impossible to tell just how much he might know.

For days he kept up the search, made occasion to linger about Kanda-bashi, visited the places where they had been together. He even had Ishii make inquiries, but beyond ascertaining that she had left her lodgings at Kanda, he could learn nothing. Again he went for council to Karsten. He laughed a little.

"By the gods, but you are the damndest man for losing ladies, for futile amours. However," he added more seriously, "it's probably as well that things have turned out as they have. The fact is that you have not the light, care-free touch to make a successful philanderer. You're a 'one woman' man. You take your affairs of the heart seriously, and for that reason it's the more essential that you make no mistake. As I say, you're a born monogamist. It's an enviable condition; you'll be happy, serene, content with just one woman, provided you find the right one. These affairs you have had recently count for nothing. You've been lonesome, in a susceptible mood. Let it

pass. Some day you'll run into the right one and your problem will be solved for good. And, one thing more, you're not the sort of a fellow who is cut out for a Japanese woman. Run along, go to the dances, play with Kimiko-san and the rest, but don't get involved, for their sake, for they take such matters seriously and you have no right to cause them heart-ache; and for your own sake as well, for you, too, take such matters seriously. Go to work and forget serious thoughts about women, Sadako-san and the rest. Heavens knows, there ought to be enough going on in Japan just now to keep a newspaperman occupied."

It was true. The atmosphere had become hectic. The railroad strike had alarmed capitalists and bureaucrats. The police were frantic, and strike leaders and Socialists, any one thought to be harboring the detested "dangerous thoughts," were being jailed right and left. Strikes became frequent. Those who incited them were put away by the police mercilessly. The method seemed successful, but soon the workers resorted instead to what they called "sabotage," grasping fondly at the foreign word, though the movement involved no violence, but consisted entirely in organized effort to do as little as possible; "going slow" was a more descriptive phrase for it. The men went to work as usual, went through the motions of performing their tasks, remained at their posts during the prescribed number of hours, but production fell to a minimum. Machinery revolved as busily as usual, but raw material was fed to it but sparingly; lathe tools moved around, back and forth, but found no steel to shape, looms whirled hummingly but empty of fabric. It was especially conspicuous in the case of the tramcar men, who would run a car a block or so, stop for half an hour while making pretense of search-

ing for some break, then progress a block or two only to halt again. Fights were staged in all the big cities between car crews and irate passengers. The police were helpless; there was no way of making men work quickly. The capitalists groaned; here were the economists calling all the time for reduction of production cost in order that Japanese goods might meet the competition of foreign wares, and yet their output was becoming absurdly expensive. But the workers were in high feather. Capital had closed so many factories and had discharged so many workmen in order to keep the stock of goods in the domestic market so low that prices would remain high — unable to grasp any theory except that high prices meant high profits — and now it was compelled to employ more workers in order to make up for the loss caused by the “go slow” tactics.

Labor leaders, Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, and all the worshipers of half-understood 'isms found fine fishing in troubled waters, certain of responsive audiences wherever they might find places in which to shout their lurid, variegated doctrines. The police were ubiquitous. By scores, even hundreds, they would attend meetings, breaking them up and jailing leaders whenever occasion offered. The Seiyukai party hired bands of *soshi*, professional ruffians, to raise disturbances at these gatherings, and free fights and broken heads became commonplace. Still, the various movements gathered force, came together in common interest as streamlets flow together and form a river. The many feeble unions joined hands, formed federations. Where heretofore strikes had been mainly isolated, men in this shop or factory striking solely in the interests of their own purely personal concerns, demanding discharge of unpopular foremen, shorter hours, higher pay, they now amalgamated and struck

together, the entire body of workers of one industry, striking in sympathy with other unions. The dockyard workers went out because the employers would not pay a full year's salary to discharged workmen; the seamen threatened to follow suit unless the demand were granted, and the employers gave in. Capital became frightened, tried to stave off the evil day by paying ever greater allowances, hoping desperately to soothe the clamor by doles of money; but the situation had gone beyond this. The day of the old feudal relation between master and workman, the personal touch of a feeling of common interest, had passed. As if born over-night, class consciousness loomed forth, overshadowed the entire situation. Demands for higher pay, shorter hours, became subordinated, fell into the background; now the cry was for a share by the workmen in control of industries, abolition of capitalism.

It became almost impossible to segregate fact from fiction. One could not know what might have happened. It was impracticable to depend on the reports of the press; one knew that the most important news was not allowed to see the light of day. Kent tried to get what he could from original sources. What was capital thinking of all this; what was it doing about it? He sought bankers and industrial leaders. They all professed that there was no cause for great worry, brought forth sheafs of statistics compiled by various government offices and capital-labor harmony societies, trying to console themselves with patently absurd figures proving that there was no unemployment, that more men were given work than lost employment, that all was serene. Ostrich-like they buried their heads in the convenient mess of figures, insistent on not seeing the truth.

"It's only a phase of the depression which we are

passing through just like other countries," they insisted. "Things are no worse here than they were in America and Europe a few decades ago when your workmen were in a similar condition. Remember, we have in a few years almost caught up industrially with the countries which were several centuries ahead of us. Give us a few years more and conditions here will be the same. Anyway, the situation here is not as bad as in the United States and England, for example. Our strikes are insignificant in comparison. We have never had business held up for weeks and months by nation-wide strikes. In New York and Chicago you have daylight bank robberies and hold-ups. In Japan a man may walk safely anywhere with a roll of bank notes in his hand, even in the poorest quarters. And the industrial workers are too few in proportion to the total of population to count for much; only they make lots of noise. The bulk of the people is agricultural. There's nothing very much to worry about."

He pointed out that danger lay in the fact that the agricultural population also had become infected with resentment against capital. Thousands of unions of tenant farmers, who constitute half of the agriculturists, had been formed and clamored against the exactions of rapacious landlords. Some of them had made united demands for rent reduction, had refused to till the soil when such were not granted, and had proclaimed that if other tenants were brought in to cultivate the land, these men would be ostracized; so the fields now lay idle. What about the formation of the gigantic federation of farmers' unions and its great convention in Kobe? What about the report that soldiers who had served their term in the army in Siberia were sowing the seeds of Bolshevism throughout the peasantry? Did not that show that the farmers

were likely to make common cause with the industrial workers?

But they remained stubbornly sanguine here also. This, too, was only a phase. A general of the Siberian expedition had said that this Bolshevism was only on the surface, like face powder, which would speedily wash off. So that was that, so to speak. Presently there would be a big rice crop; there were all indications of a bumper yield, and then the farmers would be happy again, and quiet. Anyway, capital was doing what it could. A horde of scholars and statisticians was studying the situation, and obviously it would be unwise to move in the dark, until these experts had reported. And the Government had appointed a commission for studying the problem of universal suffrage, which would report some day. It was a grave question whether the masses were ripe for the vote. It would not do to be over-hasty.

The task of obtaining reliable data with respect to the other side of the situation was equally baffling. A woman Socialist had sprung into fame through her articles in various magazines advocating the cause of the masses; partly, also, from the fact that her husband, a university professor, had been placed in jail. Kent went to see her in her small house crammed from floor to ceiling with books and pamphlets, the inevitable Karl Marx tomes looming forth with glorious prominence. She hailed him with joy, chanted a tirade of almost unbelievable accusations; the capitalists were holding the workers — men, women, and even children — in slavery. Many of them were kept far underground in mines and were not allowed to see light of day for months; they tried purposely to kill them by means of unwholesome food and unsanitary quarters in order to prevent them from going back to the country districts and spreading the cause of

Socialism. It was easy to get young men and girls to replace them, owing to the general unemployment. But he wanted something more definite, data, figures. Certainly, he should have them. She would send him such in a few days. She sent him a vast bundle of papers, a mass of laboriously contrived compilations of figures, going back into the early days of Japanese industrialism, showing by minutely detailed statistics that one-half of the factory work women died from consumption within two years of employment in the great textile mills. It seemed almost incredible, and as he went into the matter he found that figures had been given for periods before the time when vital statistics of any kind had been kept by the Government or any one else; still closer examination showed that the tables did not check, were wildly contradictory in many cases. Evidently the author had drawn her data, enthusiastically, from her inner consciousness. He went back to her, told her that her information must be more consistent, more reliable. She tore the bundle from his hands. A few days later one of the vernacular papers published a lurid account from her, mentioning him by name as a capitalist spy who had been frustrated by the famous lady Socialist.

He called on Ikeda, the head of the federation of labor, a rotund, pleasant-faced man with humorous eyes beaming from behind great round spectacles. "Yes, it is getting worse all the time," said the leader. "Of course, all this helps to bring the unions together, but it is difficult to keep them in hand. We all want abolition of capitalism, but while some of us want it accomplished peacefully, by evolution, many of the workers, most of the smaller unions especially, want nothing short of revolution. They are Sovietists, Communists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, all kinds. They are getting more and more out of hand."



"Would universal suffrage content them any?" asked Kent. "I should think if you centered on the suffrage movement, gave them that to think about, you might maintain control. Anyway, it seems to me that labor must remain powerless as long as it is voiceless and has no control in the government. I take it that you people will back up the universal suffrage agitation at the next session of the Diet?"

The eyes behind the great lenses became serious. "No, we're going to leave it alone. In fact, we dare not take it up. The workmen look upon that as futile, a mere sop, a process that's altogether too slow to suit them. We're afraid that if we took up suffrage as an organized movement, the unions would get out of hand; it would set them thinking of more revolutionary measures; they would insist on them and would sweep aside us who are trying to lead them along a constructive line of action. Anyway, the masses are hardly ripe for suffrage yet. They must be educated first; that's what we are trying to do now, to educate them."

So here, too, was temporizing. Labor leaders, like capitalist leaders, were trying to play for time, to avoid facing the music, while the steam in the kettle kept becoming denser and stronger, with ever more insistent force striving against the walls of repression. But how much was there really behind all this clamor of labor? He came to wonder to what extent these complaints were justified. It was true, what the capitalists said, that conditions in Japan were no worse, or not much worse, than they had been in America and Europe not so many decades ago. Of course, the unrest was due to the fact that workers and farmers, heretofore satisfied with feudal conditions not knowing that they could be otherwise, had suddenly been shown by the Socialists, the soldiers coming back from

Siberia, the radical press, that workmen in other countries lived in what seemed to frugal Japanese eyes the luxury of millionaires, and now they wanted similar privileges, yes, rights. But capital was right in its contention that workers who could individually bring forth only one-fifth the result produced by the white workmen could be paid wages only in proportion to their output capacity — otherwise Japanese production cost would rise to the point where Japanese goods would be helpless in world competition and industry must cease. The point seemed to be whether capital was holding down labor to unduly harsh conditions.

He took to rambling about in the poorer quarters of Tokyo, but could learn but little. The houses were frail, of thin boards and paper, but so were those of the wealthier classes; it was the form of construction adopted by a hardy people. Even if these buildings were dirtier, dingier, the population showed no sign of abject poverty, of misery. Children played merrily in the streets; men and women moved about or sat chatting in the open stores. A Japanese might have learned something, might have penetrated more intimately into their lives, might have entered their dwellings, have drawn from them their confidential thoughts, but as a foreigner he felt himself baffled by an invisible veil of reserve. They were courteous, friendly, but impenetrable. Only occasionally might he detect a hostile, wondering glance — what might this foreigner be doing in such places — or he might hear childish voices behind his back uplifted in song to the effect that the foreigner's father was a cat. One night a couple of fellows mellowed by sake wanted to take him to their bosom, tried to embrace him, overcome by all-enfolding love of mankind generally, insisted on his joining them in their festive circumambulations. It was annoying. They were harder to deal with than

if they had been unpleasant. He was trying to hold them off, irritated at the laughing crowd that had gathered, to escape, in some way. Suddenly the ranks of the onlookers parted and a Japanese in foreign clothes strode through, a middle-aged man, muscular, authoritative. "Here, you fellows, run along; can't you see that this foreigner wishes to pass?" The men stood back shamefacedly, murmured some apology. "All right, now run along." He cleared a way through the crowd. "They mean well enough," he explained to Kent, "but probably you had better let me go with you for a moment."

"Oh, I'm all right. Still, I want to thank you for your help." He began to explain why he had come; it was only due this unknown rescuer, and then the man had spoken in English, and evidently held some authority that the people here recognized. Who might he be, anyway?

"So you come to see poverty," the man laughed. "Well, if you really want to see it, the real thing, I think you may find no better man to guide you. That's my specialty, you see." He went on to explain. He was an official, it appeared, had charge of a government home for unemployed, where men might sleep for fifteen sen a night and board for forty sen a day. "But there are too few of these places," he complained. "We can take care of less than one tenth of the thousands who need it. There are no free sleeping places, no free food. The Capital-Harmony Society has provided a few reading rooms, playgrounds and all that; every now and then some rich man gives a small park; but they all give a few hundred thousands where they ought to be giving in millions. They can't see that if they don't give now, freely, these people will come some day and take it from them by force. If you care to come along, I'll show you how these people live."

He led Kent through a maze of narrow alleys, into the Fukagawa quarter, through dark lanes illumined only by faint light from open doorways. They must walk warily over rotten boards covering the slimy gutters which served as sewers, to avoid the deepest of the universal mud. Presently they came to a collection of buildings more squalid than the rest, — long, barn-like houses of filthy, rotting wood.

"Here you are," said the guide. "These are the 'Nagaya Tunnels'; they are famous for being the worst place in the city."

They entered. Through the length of the building ran a narrow passage, faced on both sides by cubicles of three mats each, spaces of six by nine feet, each housing a family, several adults and swarms of children. In the passageway all cooking and washing was done. It was cluttered with *hibachi*, firewood, cooking utensils, buckets for water brought from a pump outside, heterogeneous implements. Women were busy cooking, and acrid smoke ascended idly against the roof, escaping through a large hole and numerous cracks and crevices. As they passed down this corridor they could look into the minute rooms, packed with goods, ragged *futon*, tattered clothing, poor belongings of every kind, leaving only a scant space in the middle where humans sat huddled together or lay asleep. Some of the rooms, particularly those where a few men maintained slovenly bachelor housekeeping, were ill-kept, with paper hanging in streamers from broken *shoji* ribs, and goods scattered about haphazardly. Others formed striking contrast with desperate attempts at cleanliness, where woman hands had tried pathetically to create some kind of home atmosphere in the box-like spaces allotted them in this turmoil of poverty. Kent caught a glimpse of a family seated about a low Japanese table, father, mother and a couple

of children, sitting decorously, with the same display of graceful manners as might be seen in the abodes of the rich, daintily picking with their chopsticks fish and vegetables from cheap earthenware. A tiny glass globe with a couple of goldfish was suspended from the window frame. The little tableau was like a ray of light in the mass of grime and poverty all about it, a pitiable insistence on maintenance of the spirit of family life, of decency despite the squalor hemming it in on all sides.

As they fumbled on, some of the inhabitants recognized the guide, crowded up to him with tales of their troubles. These were men only; the women eyed them curiously, dully, but remained apathetic. From the shadows unkempt wretches emerged. An old fellow with only one eye insisted on removing his bandage. He had lost his eye in an accident while working for the municipal electric light works; but they had given him nothing. Now, he had been trying to peddle small fish, but they had stopped him because he had no license. Where could he get money for a license? He had nothing to eat; others could find no employment. They wanted assistance, money, jobs.

But, oddly, try as he might, Kent could not draw even from the all-surrounding evidences of abject poverty an impression of suffering, of heart-rending misery. It was revolting that here several hundreds of humans were forced to find shelter in these miserable hovels, collections of rotten wood worth probably less than a thousand yen as kindling and fit for nothing else. But while presence of Americans or Europeans in such quarters would have caused him indignation, intense sympathy, here these people, inured to hardship by generation after generation of Spartan frugality, possessed a happy faculty of making the best of these wretched circumstances, of accepting them stoically.

Mingled with the complaints, the stories of distress, had been laughter of children, the glimpse of the family at table, triumphantly wringing content from even such mean material. He was annoyed that he should feel like this, essentially unsympathetic, unable to register the distress which the plight of these people should produce; but the fact was that there seemed to be no anguish, no grinding, torturing grief.

He mentioned it to his companion. "It seems strange to me; here is poverty, and squalor and even want, and yet most of these people do not seem to be altogether unhappy; some even seem fairly well satisfied."

"Yes, that's true, but, as a matter of fact, you've come at the wrong time. Yesterday was the first of the month, and those of them who had jobs got their pay, and even those without jobs benefit from that. Those who have money share with the rest. But you ought to have been here last month, during the rains. I was down here trying to help, and the water came up to my armpits, tide and rain water mixed. The whole district was flooded, and the houses. In the single-story ones like the Tunnels the water stood several feet over the floors and the people had to construct makeshift shelves for themselves and their belongings. There they sat for several days, wet, hungry, cold. I've heard the cry of little children for food and their mothers trying to hush them, explaining that the father could not work during the flood. And that sort of thing is not unusual; it happens several times a year, as often as half a dozen times, whenever there is a heavy rain. This entire quarter is not fit for human habitation, but the factories have been built here because the location is convenient and the land comparatively cheap; and the workers must live near the factories. The whole district should be filled, but these

people have no voice in the government. Only the rich can vote for city councilmen, and the government funds are spent for the benefit of the rich, in wide avenues in the fine residence districts, by hundreds of thousands for celebrations — but there is no money for rescuing the poor from the floods.

“And do you know that the odd thing is that it’s these very same poor people who are carrying the burden of maintaining the city. Tokyo collects less than four million yen a year from land and house taxes, and yet she is the sixth largest city in the world. The revenue is collected by indirect taxation, by the huge profits of the car system, by the imposts and stamp duties and licenses for every conceivable thing. The proportion of business tax paid by the magnates is infinitesimally small when compared with that wrung from the peddlers and small shopkeepers. So you see, the poor wretches who must cling to their walls like bats while the flood waters sweep over their floors, are at the same time paying for the boulevards and improving the property whose owners contribute almost nothing. Until a few years ago they did not think of that; they didn’t know that things could be different. But now they’re being taught, and they’re beginning to figure things out. This is the kind of a place that breeds ‘dangerous thoughts,’ and, I tell you, when I am down here during flood time, I come pretty close to having ‘dangerous thoughts’ myself.”

A few days later Kent was telling of this experience to a group of friends, Japanese and foreign, chance-met at the Imperial Hotel bar. “It’s damnable. Of course, in every country we have rich rolling in luxury and poor ones groaning in misery, but in no place is the gulf between the classes so great, and nowhere else are the plutocrats so utterly unfeeling, so heartless; in no place are the poor ground so hard to make

such absurdly high profits, your sixty and seventy per cent. dividends, your constant subsidies to giant companies and industries, your tariffs for protection of profiteers. I tell you, when I was mucking about down there in Fukagawa and heard of what it was like during the rains, and what it will continue to be like, I felt that I should like to meet these people, the Watanabes, the Inouyes, the Yamanakas, the Oharas, the lady with the blood-dyed silken shift of the song, you know, and I should like to kick the whole damned outfit, yes, the lady, too, by the gods."

"Look out, Kent, you're getting 'dangerous thoughts.' " They laughed and dismissed the subject, but one of them, Hata, leaned across the table to Kent.

"You know, Kent-san, I don't think you'd want to kick them at all, if you met them. In fact, you'd like them. I'll bet you a tiffin on it."

"All right, you're on," he replied thoughtlessly. The others had taken up the question of the Chinese demand for the return of the Liaotung peninsula, and he was interested.

A few days later Hata appeared at his office. "I have an invitation for you, you and your friend, Mr. Karsten, to have luncheon with Baron and Baroness Ohara, almost any day that would suit you. Would next Friday do? You know," he had noted the surprise on Kent's face, "you said you'd like to meet them."

Could ever such an absurd situation occur outside of Japan? How the devil could he accept the hospitality of people whom he had said he would like to kick, the Baroness at that? And still he was greatly tempted to grasp this opportunity to see at first hand, in their intimate home surroundings, these people, these heartless plutocrats who ground down the poor that they might amass wealth in a measure far greater



than they could possibly use by even the most extravagant luxury. He hesitated.

"Did you by any chance say anything to the Oharas about my desire to kick them, Hata-san? Of course, you see that ——"

"No, of course, not," he interrupted eagerly. "You know, I'm fairly close to Baron Ohara, and I really wanted you to meet him and the Baroness. They are charming people; you'll revise your opinion. I've told them of your investigation of the conditions of the poor in Tokyo, and they are much interested and really want you to tell them about it all. Anyway, do you think it would be fair for you to see only one side and then condemn the other? How about Friday?"

Kent accepted. What an odd proposition. Of course, Hata was right enough; he must seek both sides before passing judgment; but what the devil interest might Hata have in this? He did not know much about him, a suave, 'frock-coated gentleman, highly intelligent, fluent in English and French, ubiquitous in all places where Japanese and foreigners intermingled. He was known to be more or less definitely connected with the big interests — some even claimed that he was obscurely identified with the Foreign Office — but he was clever, an excellent companion, always ready to be of service in giving information or obtaining it for the foreigners. They accepted him as a sort of unofficial liaison officer maintained by the Japanese for the purpose of keeping them informed as to what the foreigners thought; also, in some measure, to elucidate the Japanese point of view. He was a bit of a mystery, but a pleasant one.

On the appointed day Hata came to escort them in one of the Baron's automobiles. "Here we are; this is the place," he pointed with almost proprietary pride to a long brick wall rising well above the height of a

tall man's head, hiding from view whatever might be enclosed within. "How do you like that gate?" Liveried commissionaires held open the massive iron-grille work, flanked on each side by tower-like butresses. "The Baron had it brought from France; it's an exact copy of that of some château somewhere there."

"Frankly, I'd rather have seen in its place one of those great wooden, brass-studded gates of old Japan," said Karsten. "Wouldn't you, Kent?" But Kent did not answer. He recalled a picture he had seen in the Japanese papers, some months ago, of this very gate, closed, with a score of women clamoring, gesticulating through its ornate bars, workers who had vainly tried to bring their complaints direct to the owner of the factories in which they were employed. Eventually they had been hustled away by the police.

The automobile swept round a miniature mountain cleverly built up from carefully placed rocks. Trees had been planted amongst them; vines sprang from the interstices; skillful hands had laboriously contrived to reproduce a picture of untouched, untrammelled nature, an atmosphere of the free and restful mountainous country that made it difficult to realize that the grimy tangles of the city were but a hundred yards behind.

More liveried servants met them at the door of the mansion, a large modern thing, but well planned, with the quiet air of great wealth which disdainfully avoided garishness. The Baron met them in the hall, a young man — Kent judged him to be about thirty-five — slim, seeming tall with his trim athletic figure, almost like some young French aristocrat as is a type which recent years has brought forth among the wealthy classes of Japan. He was graceful, pleasantly placing them at ease. Harvard, then Cambridge, had

obliterated the stamp of race; it did not enter one's thought; one felt exactly as if he might have been a young Frenchman, Italian, Spaniard. He led them into an immense living room, high-ceilinged, with French windows giving on to an Italian garden which had been laid out behind the house. This also was entirely modern, with the same atmosphere of wealth carefully restrained by unfailing taste, excellently chosen furnishings, each thing of value and elegance, but harmonious, with an air of comfort, of a delightful living place. Possibly a hint of excess, over-crowding, might be conveyed by the superabundance of paintings which covered the walls everywhere. At first glance the display seemed too lavish, garish even, but this soon wore away as one came to look more closely, appreciating the beauty of each individual piece. Here was a gallery of modern art with here and there an almost priceless thing by some old master, and one sensed that this profusion was due, not merely to a desire for display, but to a genuine affection for these pictures, a real wish to have them ever before the eye.

Karsten became enthusiastic immediately, could not keep away from the paintings. In a moment he and the Baron had become as if they were old friends, passing from one thing to the other, appraising, commenting, sharing enthusiasm. Even Kent became absorbed. A discreet clearing of the throat from Hata recalled them. "Baroness Ohara."

In this atmosphere of modern Europe she seemed almost out of place as she came up slowly, with tripping gait in her soft *zori*, absolutely Japanese in her garb of soft, neutral-hued kimono silks and great obi band; only the coiffure showed some concession to the modern, the hair, free from the oil of conventional hairdressing, being arranged in its natural softness

into a wavy crown hiding part of the forehead and protruding over the ears.

The Baron made the introductions and she bowed deeply, gravely, extending her welcome to the guests in the polished refinement of Japanese phrase.

"It's a good thing you speak Japanese," commented the Baron to Karsten and Kent. "My wife speaks only Japanese. She has never been abroad." So for a moment the commonplaces were exchanged in Japanese, but soon he and Karsten were back at the pictures again. Two other guests, Japanese, joined them. One of these spoke French as his only foreign language. The conversation became polyglot, as they conversed in English or French about the pictures, or in Japanese with the Baroness. Kent was asked to take her in to luncheon.

At table, also, everything was in European style. It was with difficulty that Kent could compel himself to realize that here he was really in Japan; he could succeed only by glancing at the pretty, dainty figure at his side, listening to her soft, melodious Japanese. At the beginning the talk concerned itself about the poor quarters. Kent tried to describe what he had seen. They were all interested, receptive; but somehow he felt that he was not speaking well, that he was failing entirely to convey the picture, the sensations which he had felt; he could not drive himself into the vein in these surroundings. He tried to conjure before his mind the miserable realities of the "Tunnels," to revive the sense of indignation caused by contrast of the misery there and the luxury here, at the unfeelingness of these plutocrats whose most trifling bit of ornament was worth many times the value of the Tunnel shacks and all they contained. But he could not make himself despise these people, or hate them. He caught a glance from Hata. Was he thinking of his expressed

wish to kick them, this graceful, petite incarnation of charm who was sitting right next to him, eyes wide with interest as if he were telling of matters of a distant country, things which were far from her, which had not the least direct concern with her. The thought confused him. He felt with irritation that his talk was unconvincing, featureless, lame. He was glad when the interest of Karsten in the pictures brought the main drift of the conversation to that subject. The talk became general, the Baron and Karsten leading. When they left the table, they returned to examination of the pictures, followed them down along the walls, Karsten and the Japanese, into the hallway beyond. Presently Kent found himself alone with the Baroness.

"Tell me some more about these poor people," she asked. "You know, they came here once, a lot of poor women, and wanted to talk to my husband. But he was not here. I crept outside and hid in the shrubbery so I could watch them. They were standing there by the gate and stretching their arms in through the iron grilles. I felt so sorry for them. I wanted to go and talk to them, to have them come in here and talk to me; but I was afraid. I know nothing about business. They might not have liked it, the men in charge of the business. I was afraid of them, these grave, old men who are in charge of the factories and the mines and all that. I was more afraid of them than of my husband. He knows so little of the business, too, you know."

So this was the lady whose silken shift was dyed crimson with blood from working girls' fingers. He wondered if she knew the song; probably not; she lived as if she were thousands of miles removed from the grim sordidness whence was evolved almost miraculously all this wealth of beauty and art. But

as he began to tell her about it, it seemed so futile, so incongruous, like trying to contaminate the frail fairness of a hothouse orchid with thought of the grimy coal mines which furnished fuel for the heat which gave it life. He could understand how it was possible for these people, the plutocrats, to be innocent of realization of the meanness of the sources of their wealth. Again he wanted to get away from the subject.

"This is a wonderful garden," he stepped up to a window. "I admire the artistry with which it has been fashioned. Here you can see but a bit of Italy. You would never know that Tokyo is right beyond."

"I'm so glad you like it. That is my great interest, the gardens," she was quite radiant. "And beyond that, below the terrace, we have a typical Japanese garden, just like real, old Japan. You must see it some time. I'm often quite lonesome, you know. Some day, when you are not too busy, you must come and have tea with me, and I will show you all the gardens."

She went on, telling of the plans for an artificial waterfall, run by an invisible electric pump, which she was having constructed; about the chrysanthemums which she was nurturing carefully for exhibition at the great November show at Hibiya. He enjoyed her, just like that, with her natural, ingenuous concern with beauty of flowers, the congruous interest of a gentlewoman of Japan. And as she went on, with bright eyes and soft voice, and the picture flashed into his mind of the women, hard-voiced, stridently storming at the gate, the conviction came to him that should this occur while he was here, were they to come this moment, he would do what he could to keep this dainty, pure, flower-like little woman away, removed from the grim realities which must not be suffered to enter disturbingly into the serenity of her existence.

"Well, you didn't kick the Baroness while we weren't looking, did you?" chaffed Karsten, as they were on their way home.

"Oh, shut up, Karsten," it irritated gratingly. "I know well enough when I've made a fool of myself. You needn't rub it in." They went on a while in silence. "Still, you know, Karsten, I can't help feeling that I might have made better use of my opportunity to do something for those poor devils out in Fukagawa. I feel sure that had I been able to be more convincing, to make them feel as I felt when I was there, as I feel now, as a matter of fact, I might have contrived to do something to help. These people, the Oharas, are decent enough, kind enough, would surely give gladly from their wealth. Here they spend on a picture more than a hundred of what those poor devils earn in a year. It isn't right. Of course, it's because they don't know; but they *should* know, at least Ohara should. It's an obligation of wealth; only he doesn't think of it."

"But he does, in a fashion, at least," Karsten interrupted him. "He was talking to me about it, out there in the hall. He wants to do something; he would like to give, but he doesn't know how to go about it. He tells me that he has spoken to his directors, but they tell him that he must not interfere with business, that his ill-advised attempts would do more harm than good, and the constant attempts at blackmail to which he is exposed, like the rest of the millionaires, do not particularly encourage him to inject himself into the whirl of business. And, you know, if I were in his place, I think I should do exactly as he does, spend my time collecting pictures, building gardens, adding to the beauty of the city, with shooting and golf as side issues. I should be content, as he is, to leave my business in the hands of those who have far better

qualifications to conduct it, technical training and all that. Anyway, Ohara has the satisfaction of knowing that his concerns are leading the way for improvement. You know, some of them are spoken of as 'model' factories."

Kent did not answer, only shrugged his shoulders. Yes, "model factories"!



## CHAPTER XVII

Gradually life became smoothed into the old routine existence. News seemed to occur sporadically in cycles, like the apexes and depressions of a chart; at times the vernacular press would be filled with accounts of disturbing events, strikes, mass meetings of workmen, of Socialists demanding this or that, establishment of shop committees in factories, recognition of the Soviet government; reports of arrests and police dispersing gatherings; and this would be followed by hiatus-like intervals when it seemed almost as if all these things had been forgotten, as if the excitement had outworn itself. Kent found himself going often to the dances at Tsurumi; there was little else to do. He began to find Tokyo dull.

He was sitting with Karsten one evening in the study upstairs, talking idly of this and that. It was late; the brilliant glitter of the *machiai* below was gradually fading. Some one in the entrance hall was talking with Jun-san; they could hear the faint murmur of voices. Suddenly Jun-san appeared.

"Kent-san," wide-open eyes showed surprise, bewildered wonder. "A young lady has come to see you, Suzuki Kimiko-san. She says she must see you. What shall I do?"

"Well, I'll be hanged! Just wait a moment, Jun-san." He turned to Karsten, met only his ironic smile as he blew great smoke clouds luxuriously against the ceiling. "Damn it, Karsten, don't sit there like an ass. I haven't the slightest idea what that girl has come here for. I have been with her often at Tsurumi and

at hotel dances, you know, but, by the gods, there isn't the slightest reason why she should come here, a girl of her class, at this time of the night, a *go-fujin*, a lady. Why it's even more serious in Japan than it would be at home."

"Seems to me the only thing you can do is to ask her up here. You can't in decency let her stand there in the hall. Ask Suzuki-san to come up, Jun-san. Kent, you've got to find out what is the trouble, anyway. By Cæsar, for a man of your continent tastes, you seem to have more than your share of exciting episodes with women."

They could hear the exchange of the usual ritual of polite phrases between the women as they were mounting the stairs. "Please enter." Jun-san drew the partition aside.

Kimiko stood in the doorway, hands nervously clenched, quivering a little, lips trembling as she spoke, words issuing haltingly in short breaths. "Kent-san. I've come to you. I've run away."

"You've run away." He had risen to meet her; stood dumbly gazing at her as if she had suddenly dropped from the ceiling. She had run away! It seemed as if his brain could grapple with just that one idea, that he could not get beyond it.

"Sit down please, Suzuki-san," Karsten came to the rescue. "Jun-san, will you please have some tea brought. Get to your senses, Kent. We must do what we can to assist this young lady. Here, let me take your wraps, Suzuki-san," he took them, pressed her gently into a chair, bustled about to give Kent time to collect himself.

But Kent was still bewildered. "So you have run away. Why?"

"Oh, it's a long story. I'll tell you presently, to-morrow; only find some place for me here to-night."

She was fighting hard for control of her voice, hands clenched tightly to the chair arms. "Only let me stay here to-night."

"But what about your family? You must go home, Kimiko-san, or you'll have all kinds of trouble. I'll see you home, little girl, and then to-morrow you can come and tell me all about your troubles. Can't you see that that will be better," he spoke soothingly. "I'll see you home."

"I can't go home. There's no one there. They have all gone to the country. They don't know yet that I have run away."

That, at least, was some relief. She explained that the family had left Tokyo a few days before, while she stayed with friends, expecting her to join them later. "But then I heard, oh, then I heard ——" she glanced at Karsten. He looked to Kent. Jun-san and the servants entered with the tea things. The matter-of-fact mechanics of having tea brought the situation down to a more natural level. "I wonder, Suzuki-san, whether it would not be better to wait until to-morrow," suggested Karsten. "Then you'll be less excited. We'll take care of you. What do you think?" She nodded eagerly. In the reaction of the commonplace she wished only to gain postponement. It was arranged that she should stay the night in Jun-san's cottage.

After breakfast, Kent found himself alone with Kimiko. Karsten and Jun-san had contrived to withdraw inconspicuously. "And now, Kimiko-san," he drew his chair close to hers. "Tell me all about it."

She brought both hands up to her hair, smoothed it back slowly. "I ran away," she spoke evenly, measuredly — evidently she had rehearsed carefully what she intended to say — "I ran away because I heard that they wanted me to marry Kikuchi-san."

During the night he had puzzled the matter over and had come to the conclusion that it must be something like that, that the family, after the old Japanese fashion, must have decided that now that she had reached the age when girls must marry, arrangements must be made for contracting a suitable alliance. He had even thought that young Kikuchi might be the one; the families were close, and the Suzuki money might fit in well with the noble but not over-wealthy Kikuchi house. It seemed natural enough; Kikuchi had shown that he liked the girl. He had wondered whether this young Japanese might not resent the evident intimacy of a foreigner with this bright, young beauty, though he had never given sign thereof. And now, why the deuce had she come to him? That, too, had puzzled him. Could it be that——? No, of course, not. Still, the thought had insisted. What if she wanted him to marry her? The idea had had allurements. He liked her very much, could almost contrive to believe that he might love her. But he held out against the thought; the family would be sure to set itself against it; and even if they should marry first and confront it with the accomplished fact, the papers would be sure to revel in the incident, as they always did where daughters of the aristocracy followed the unconventional. They would make her out a decadent, wantonly abandoning the decent traditions, would harry her into unhappiness with their hue and cry. And then he himself; he had made up his mind that Karsten had been right, that in spite of its allurements, marriage with a Japanese girl would not work out in his case. He had reasoned it all out that time at Hakone. But was that why she had come to him?

She seemed to read his thought. "I came to you, Kent-san, because I could go to no Japanese. They would have been shocked, would have sent me home.

And I wanted to talk to some one, to get away from the family where I was. I knew that the go-between would be coming in a few days, and I wanted to get advice first. I didn't know what to do."

"But why don't you want to marry Kikuchi-san? Don't you like him?" he was sparring, trying to elicit from her something that might give a clew.

"Yes, I like him, but I would never marry a Japanese like him, to be just like these other old-fashioned Japanese married women, always obedient, always compelled to serve him, to have to regard whatever he might do as right, even if he had geisha sweet-hearts; never to have a right to have a personality of my own."

"But surely Kikuchi-san is modern. I know him. Sometimes I think he's almost radical. He takes after foreign ideas in everything. It seems to me——"

"Oh, yes, of course, he's modern. He goes to the dances, and dresses after the *haikara* fashions, and plays golf, and talks very advanced politics, and all that. And in all that he is really modern, advanced, like so many of our young men; but when it comes to marriage, to the matter of the standing of women, he's like the rest of them, too. They want modernism and liberalism, but only for the men. In regard to us women their view is different; there they want to stick entirely to the old, hidebound rules. They want the modern freedom of thought and of action — but only for the men.

"But we women, we want the right to think too, to live our own lives just as your women do. We are no more stupid, no more old-fashioned than the men. But they are all against us, all the men. See how often the *Fujin Koraon*, the Public Opinion of Women paper, is suppressed by the police. But still we learn and we know. Women are going into business and

into politics; there are even many women Socialists, and the police are afraid of them. And in the matter of marriage; we want now to have a right to say whom we want to marry, to have a right to marry — for love." She looked him straight in the eye, compelling her glance to meet his, blushing a little, but only finger tips rubbing restlessly against one another betraying her nervousness. "Even in school we talked about love, yes, even free love. It is right if people love each other, if there's no other way. *Shikatanagai*. It can't be helped then. And the principal called in Shinto priests, and had them perform, right in the school, the 'soul-quieting ceremony,' and eighteen of us had to assist them, all dressed in white. And we laughed at it all. It was so silly.

"That is the reason why you hear about the Clover Leaf Club, which receives letters from men and women who want to marry, and the officers sort them out and bring together the couples which they think are well matched. That's why you see sometimes in the newspapers advertisements for husbands, occasionally even for foreign husbands," she laughed demurely. "Oh, that's silly, I know, but still it all shows how we feel. And that's how I feel. I don't want to marry, at least, not now; but if I ever do, I shall want to make my own choice, and I shall surely choose a man who believes as I do.

"That's the trouble in Japan, if a girl grows a few years older than twenty, the family consider that it is a disgrace if she doesn't marry. That is why they are beginning to worry about me, especially as they have had to give it up about my sister; but then they think that in her case it is the fault of the schooling she received abroad. So now they are doubly anxious on my account; they don't want two old maids well over twenty in the family. But now that I have run away,

that would be an even worse scandal. The papers would play it up as they did the countess who tried to commit double suicide with a chauffeur, or as they did with Akiko-san, the millionaire's wife who ran away with a poet. You know, I have been in the papers once already. That was when they were making such a fuss about Japanese girls dancing foreign fashion, and some of them even published the names of girls who went to dances. One of them mentioned my name, and my parents were so angry. Now, if they don't leave me alone, I won't go home, and the papers will learn about my having run away, and that will be worse than ever, especially because I have run away to a foreigner."

She leaned back, crossed one knee over the other, looked at him expectantly. She had gained her composure entirely, even enjoyed the situation, now that the difficult part, the telling, was done with. She evidently anticipated approval from him, praise of her cleverness. But the revelation of her motive in coming to him was like a douche of cold water. Of course, he ought to be pleased. What he had taken to be the unfolding of a melodrama, tragedy possibly, developing slowly, ominously, towards an inescapable woeful climax, had suddenly grotesquely become transformed into a droll burlesque, fantastic but harmless. But the suddenness of the metamorphosis irritated him, the sense of finding himself taking a rôle in farce where he had, gravely, been preparing himself for pathos. So all his vain imaginings that she might have sought him out because of affection on her part, because of her having greater confidence in him, was mere fancy. The little minx was using him merely as a convenient lay figure where a moment before he had thought himself to be cast in a principal rôle. What an anti-climax!

"And now that you have planned it all out so well, what do you propose to do now? What do you expect me to do?"

She caught the irony in his voice. "Now, please, Kent-san, don't be angry. I thought you would be pleased when I got it all arranged so nicely. I thought it all out last night. You wouldn't really want me to run away to you, with you, would you now?"

Was she in earnest? Was the serious note that had crept into her voice, the appeal vaguely to be sensed therein, something more than mere anxiety to dispel his displeasure with her stratagem? How much did she think of him, or how little? It seemed as if he might detect the faintest undertone of earnestness under the words rippling from her lips, a hint of dark shadow deep in her eyes. For a moment the temptation to grasp her hands, to draw her to him, to learn just what was passing in her mind, gripped him; but instantly came the other thought, — what if she should be in earnest? He shook himself together; he had been on the brink of taking a chance which might have been replete with fateful potentialities. Steady!

"No such luck, of course." Purposely he spoke lightly, banteringly. The moment had passed safely; still, curiosity piqued him and he knew it would continue to do so — now that he would never know.

"You know, I think the very best thing would be to have a talk with your sister." The only thing for him to do now was to get this tangle straightened as soon and as neatly as possible. "She could fix it up for you with your parents. Do you think you can get her here today if you send a telegram?"

"Oh, yes; it's only a couple of hours by train." She adopted the suggestion easily, seemed almost to have lost interest. It was arranged that Kent should return to the house that afternoon that council might



be held between him and the sisters. The entire episode was becoming flat and prosaic.

On his way to the office he wondered whether he had better look up Kikuchi. They were intimate; had he been an American he should surely have sought a frank discussion of the whole affair. He was sure that Kikuchi would be able to give the advice which he felt he needed as he stumbled fumblingly into this maze of Oriental convention and custom, prescriptive usages governed by modes of thought crystallized by centuries of observance, at which he might but conjecture vaguely. But as he thought of how he might venture to approach the subject, it seemed too amazingly difficult, too delicate a matter to attack hampered by uncertainty as to the reactions which might be caused in the Oriental mind.

So he gave it up, decided to give the whole affair no more thought until the afternoon, and flung open the door to the office determined to devote himself entirely to whatever routine the day might bring. There was Kikuchi, sitting lazily, feet against a table. It was almost uncanny, as if by mere thought, summoned by a wish, he had materialized like a genii of some kind.

"Well, I'll be hanged. You know, I had just been thinking of you, Kikuchi-san. By Jove, you're just the man I wanted to see." Now, that was just what he should not have said; in his surprise the words had slipped from him. Well, anyway, now he would wait and see what the other might have to say.

"I thought so; so you see, I'm here." He advanced, hand outstretched, smiling. "No use beating about the bush, is there? It's about your charming little visitor, Kimiko-san, is it not?"

Confound him, how did he know? Of course, it was generally accepted that the authorities kept them-

selves fairly well informed as to the doings of foreigners, especially correspondents and such, but this was just a little too surprising, too damnably efficient.

"Never mind," Kikuchi had caught his thought. "I found out about it quite accidentally. It's all right. There will be no scandal; it won't get out. But I had an idea that I might be concerned in this, you know, so I just came to see you to find out; that is, if you will tell me?"

Well, why not? He had hesitated about seeing Kikuchi, but here fate had solved the question for him. He filled his pipe deliberately, spoke slowly, felt his way, gave but a bare outline. Kimiko had run away because she feared a marriage was being arranged for her. She did not want to marry at all. He emphasized the unimportance of his own appearance in the drama, as a mere incidental figure, convenient as a basis for the threat of potential scandal which formed the kernel of Kimiko's scheme.

"You don't flatter yourself, do you," Kikuchi laughed. "Well, neither do I, for, of course, you needn't have been so studiously delicate in leaving out the fact that I am the unwelcome bridegroom — for I take it that she told you. But it all suits me splendidly. I don't want to marry her any more than she wants to marry me, and her scheme should work out fine for both of us. But we'll have to move quickly lest there be a scandal in earnest. That sort of thing won't remain secret forever."

He leaned back, fingers drumming a rat-tat-tat on the chair arm, evidently entirely content. "Why so serious, Kent-san. What are you thinking? Here, out with it."

"Well, since you yourself invite it, I don't mind telling you that you puzzle me, you two, you and Kimiko-san." He was glad that the other had given

him the opportunity. "You seem to me made for each other, both young, having the same tastes, liberal thoughts, modern mode of living; and you seem to like each other, quite evidently so; and yet, when it comes to marriage, you both fight shy. You know, to me, to the foreign point of view, the whole thing is, to tell the truth, mighty puzzling."

"Of course it is," Kikuchi laughed. "You've missed the main point entirely; but she didn't, Kimiko-san. She knew well enough. Kent-san, old man, you're quite right about my liking Kimiko-san. In fact, it's more than probable that I like her far more than I shall care for whatever girl I eventually marry. But the point is that I don't want a modern wife, after modern style, with love, woman's rights, modern female thoughts and all that. Will you let me be entirely frank, Kent-san. All right; then I'll tell you just how I and many others look at it. The point is that Japan has attained great gains from Western civilization, electricity, steamships, railroads, and thousands of other things that make life more pleasant and convenient; but, honestly now, can you show me where we have gained much culturally, or spiritually, or morally? Of course, some foreigners point to Christianity, but you know as well as I do that much of that is entirely on the surface. The better classes become Christians because it is modern, just as they might learn fox-trotting or playing the piano; and the poorer ones take it up because it is a cheap way to learn English or any other of the matters of instruction that the missionaries hold out as bait. What else have we gotten morally or culturally from you that was better than our own? We are losing our art, manners, morals, and getting instead your freak futurism, your jazz and your cocktail-drinking, leg-displaying flapper. Now, I'm willing to admit that

all that amuses me. I enjoy the dancing, the freedom with these girls. I have a better time with them than I possibly shall have with the girl of the type whom I shall marry; but, heavens, I don't marry a wife for entertainment, because she's a good fellow. I marry a girl whom I can respect as a mother to my children. Mind you, I don't want to seem to criticize your system. It may suit you entirely, be just the thing for you; but it is entirely inapplicable to us. Your country is run on the theory of the development and the rights of the individual. In Japan the basis of our entire social system and body politic is the family. In America, where each individual must look after the expression of his own personality, it is plain that marriage must be by personal selection, though I admit it astounded me, — what I saw in America. A young man and a girl meet, dance. 'Here, your step just fits in with mine. Let's get married.' You know, it's almost as bad as that; and then, when you have let themselves tie themselves up thus unthinkingly, you make it almost impossible for them to remedy it if it's a mistake. Divorce must be due to some disgraceful reason, — adultery, desertion, failure to provide; one must either continue to drag out life in a marriage which is a curse to the parties thereto and which does no good to the community, or prove oneself some kind of a beast. In Japan we make marriage a serious matter, try to give it the best possible chance for permanency for the sake of the community and of the State; but incidentally the parties themselves benefit. When you read the papers of America and those of Japan — and ours are, if anything, more sensational than yours — you'll find that on the whole we have far fewer marriage messes than you have.

"That's why I shall marry a girl who will place her duty to her family above everything else, who will be

content with her home, flower arrangement, ceremonial tea, looking after her children and her husband. There won't be much excitement in it, or fun, but then, if I want that, I can find it elsewhere. I don't marry for fun or for excitement. I marry to form a family.

"So there is one thing where you may call me reactionary, if you like, and that's in respect to women. When I saw in America your eternally jazzing, slangy, impertinent flapper, the girl who bobs her hair and 'rolls them below the knee,' I was told is the phrase, and when I saw the inroads which this phenomenon, this freakish caricature of womanhood, was beginning to make in Japan, with some of our girls who want to be modern, by talking woman's rights, and personal expression, and free love and all that, then I said to myself, yes, Japan owes much to Western civilization, and we may yet gain much from it; but when it comes to the women, the family relations, let us keep out the Western system as we would a plague."

"Thanks, I understand," Kent spoke drily. "I see your point; still it seems to me a bit rough on the women, especially those like the Suzuki girls. You've surprised me, Kikuchi-san. I thought you were among the foremost of the moderns."

"And why am I not?" He snapped out the retort. "Simply because I don't want to see Japan adopt a system which has resulted in a riot of divorce scandals, married women running loose, the family system a mockery? And yet, Kent-san you know that we young men in Japan cannot justly be accused of being reactionary, and you know that we are likely to have on our hands problems so pressing that we won't have time to dabble with drawing-room sex questions. Can you find it illustrated any better than it is in the case of us younger men in the Foreign Office? We know

jolly well that the General Staff is still running the country; we see our diplomats humiliated continually when, after they have bound Japan to some international agreement, the militarists cynically walk right through it and leave us to wipe up the mess as best we can, leaving us a laughing stock and placing Japan in the position of a nation whose word is worth nothing.

“Do you know that all we are waiting for is a chance to get rid of the older men, these pussyfoot, over-careful old men who now run affairs, and to fight it out with the militarists. We shall have the people with us. We must have a government for the people and not for the army and navy. It's bound to come. The government is rotten as it is, with the General Staff doing as it pleases without being responsible to the Cabinet; with the officials nothing but politicians, many of them in the pay of this or that of the big interests. That's why they call them geisha politicians, because, like geisha, they are being kept by rich men. What can you expect where the Premier gets six thousand dollars and the Cabinet Ministers four thousand dollars a year and their underlings in proportion? That's what we have got to do away with, that and favoritism because of money or title. You know, I'm not going to accept the title when my father dies. Peerages should last only one generation; should go only to the men who earn them. And I'm not the only one of my class who feels like this. There are many of us. Evil days have come on Japan; the country is being run for the benefit of the few, a rotten, corrupt bureaucracy in the service of plutocracy; or by the militarists, who may be patriotic enough, according to their lights, but who have become anachronistic — so they must go, too. Remember, Kent-san, no matter how badly things may look on the surface that you

see, the great bulk of the Japanese people remains as it was, patriotic, frugal, hard-working, eager to learn. They will give Japan its great future, these masses, and that task is what interests me, not chattering over sex sentimentalities with flappers. Girls like Kimiko-san, dancing, jazz and the rest, are all very well as a pastime in one's leisure, just as are geisha, but when it comes to the serious affairs of life, pah!" he waved his hand, snapping the fingers. "You get me, Kent-san?"

Kimiko's sister brought the news, that afternoon, that the parents were ready to surrender. They had already called off the go-between. Kimiko-san would never again be exposed to marriage without being consulted first. They all had tea. It should have been a gay occasion; Karsten tried desperately to bring about an atmosphere of high spirits; but the feeling of uneasiness, high-strung quiver of excitement, would not away. The women were ever together, the girls and Jun-san, whispering, fluttery. For some reason it was a failure. It was almost with a sense of relief that they saw the girls to the gate.

"Poor little things." Kent was looking down at them as they tripped down the stone stairway, hand in hand, a pretty, entrancing picture, one in the fashion of the West, chic turban, high-heeled shoes, narrow waist; the other dainty, richly colored, brilliant, with her gorgeous obi, widely drooping kimono sleeves. At the foot of the stairs they stopped, waved; then they climbed into the waiting automobile.

"Yes, I'm sorry for them," said Karsten. "They are so eager to adopt our civilization, our modernism; they try so hard; and the better they succeed the worse it will probably be for them. They're ahead of their day, victims of the transition period, poor little butterflies broken on the wheel."

## CHAPTER XVIII

Sylvia was in Tokyo.

He tried to beat down the wave-crest of emotion, happiness, that surged over him, gripped him and shook him. He wanted none of it, wished desperately to fight against it. It was all right for him to be pleased to see her again, to be with her, but this titillating on the verge of transports of joy — he would simply have to keep a tight hold on himself. The situation held too many potentialities of complications, uncertainties, distress. Even the way in which the news of her coming had reached him had illustrated, oddly, the curious blend of the bitter and the sweet which the situation held. It had been the Tinker hag again. She had caught him at tea, had seized upon him and led him to a secluded corner that she might enjoy in every detail, undisturbed, his reaction to the dénouement. Probably she had overcome a desire to fare forth and shout out the news in the market place, had kept it for him, so that she might be the first to communicate it. It was her hobby, probably the only interest which kept her alive, this interest in living, this contriving complicated situations among her acquaintances in order that she might satisfy a morbidly curious and perverted taste for the dramatic by gloating over their display of the more unusual emotions, their unguarded laying bare before her avid eye the reactions usually painstakingly held in check. He had been irritatedly aware of the greedy glare of this old woman; it was almost indecent; as she watched him



rapaciously solicitous lest she fail to catch the slightest indication of face or voice which might betray his feelings. He did not think she could have gotten much out of it. He thought he had played up well. Still, one could never know. Anyway, it was disquieting, disgusting, that the return of Sylvia, after all this time, should immediately revive the watchfulness of the idle women, should so wantonly render complicated, almost impossible, intimate relation with this girl.

And, now, what about Sylvia? Did she know that he had become free? How long had she known it? Had she just heard of it and returned forthwith? No; he dismissed that thought. But might she not have heard some time ago and simply allowed a decent interval to elapse in order to avoid giving the gossips grist for their mills? But he caught himself up sharply. What an ass he was to imagine, vain-gloriously, that he had entered into her considerations at all. Presumably she had been governed by entirely different motives, something not even remotely connected with him. What grounds had he to imagine that his presence was of the slightest moment to her. Of course, it did seem as if she must have left Tokyo on account of the gossip connecting him with her; but, after all, that proved nothing, could certainly not by even the most fanciful contortion of imagination be construed into an indication of feeling related to affection. No, he was an ass.

The only thing he could do would be to sit tight and suffer matters to occur as they might. He was curious to meet her — he sternly insisted to himself that that was all — and yet he rather dreaded it, wondered what he should say, how he should act. He would leave it to her to take the lead. Women did these things better than men, had finer perceptions, possessed an instinc-

tive sureness with which they could handle deftly such delicate situations.

So when he met her, he was not much surprised that the incident seemed almost commonplace. Luckily, there were others at the time whom she met also for the first time since her return. She treated him exactly like these, included him with those others with the usual drab, conventional commonplaces. It almost irritated him that the meeting had been so trivial. Was she then not interested? It piqued him. Well, why shouldn't he find out. He was free now, and if he did care for her — there was no denying that she interested him immensely, that she still had that old charm for him, yes, hang it, that he did care for, that he might easily come to love her. And why not? Came back to his mind the charm of the days when he and she had been close, when he had been afraid to dally with the thought of her in the place of Isabel. He need not fear that now. He had the right to. And if it had been pleasant then, why not now, why not allow himself the felicity of dreaming that dream. He warmed to the thought, a glow of sheer pleasure and happiness suffused him. Of course. He would be careful to be tactful. She was tremendously sensitive and he must take care not to spoil everything by being too precipitate, but he would watch his chance.

It took time, still, as he felt his way slowly, with anxious care, holding himself in check, carefully consolidating such little gains as he made before venturing an infinitely small step forward, he felt that they were gradually approaching something like the old relation. He had even come to the point where they had made a few small excursions together. But they were few and separated by intervals that seemed infinitely long, and he fretted under the necessity of keeping himself in hand. Now that he was allowing himself to consider,

at least as a remote potentiality, the idea of love, the situation became ever so much more complicated, was more difficult to manage. He must not allow himself to think of this too much. In the back of his mind remained the uneasy thought that he had loved Isabel, had ardently desired to marry her—and then his marriage had been a failure, anyway. If one failed once, one might do so twice. After all, love was often mainly something contrived by oneself. One took love of an image conjured up by one's imagination for love of the woman; it might be a sort of auto-intoxication. He must be sure of himself. He must force himself to be rational, to refrain from letting fancy take charge of what should be the function of the brain. Anyway, there was plenty of work to do. He would use work as a counterirritant.

Japan had suddenly launched into one of its periods of frantic excitement. First came news from Manchuria, where Chang Tso-lin was moving a great expedition to drive the Soviet troops out of Mongolia. Conservative papers registered perfunctory surprise at the completeness of his equipment, motor transport, field artillery, even airplanes; but most of the papers, the people generally, sneered contemptuously, shrugged shoulders. It was an old story. Of course, the Manchurian war-lord could have obtained them from only one source, the militarists. The War Office issued its usual denial, which no one believed. Presently came news of attacks by Chinese bandits on settlements in the South Manchuria Railway territory, massacres of Japanese colonists, clashes with Japanese police, burning of a consulate or two. From high official sources, unnamed, but generously quoted in the press, were given out alarming statements. It was the Bolshevik menace, irresponsible hordes of Manchuria, malcontent Koreans, being goaded on by mysterious machinations

from Moscow. It would be necessary to move troops into Manchuria to protect the railway region, especially now that Chang Tso-lin was engaged in Mongolia and could not protect neighboring territory. The divisions in Korea were moved inland. It would be necessary to send fresh troops to Korea. Of course, it would be impossible to consider the proposition to reduce the army at the session of the Diet which was just about to meet.

The people murmured; again the feeling became prevalent that a great militaristic scheme was being carried out, cleverly hidden by the uniformed old men up there in the copper-roofed building towering on the hill beyond the Foreign Office. Opinions were divided. Some insisted that Japanese lives must be avenged, colonists protected, the dignity of the Empire upheld; others cried out bitterly that the entire turmoil was but part of a great plot ingeniously hatched out by the General Staff. Some papers claimed to have proof that this was but another attempt to carry out the favorite old military plan, to have a buffer state created by Chang Tso-lin and remnants of White Russian factions; that the bandits were backed by Chang, that the very rifles which had dealt out death to Japanese had been furnished in mysterious round-about ways by the War Office. It was hinted that the massacres were, in fact, quite welcome to the General Staff, that they were a part of the whole scheme.

It was a busy period for Kent. News was breaking constantly, here and there, in unexpected quarters. It was intensely interesting at first, sending story upon story over the wire, each one conveying the tingling feeling of anticipation that each day was bringing nearer some great event, some cataclysm, indefinite but gradually assuming certainty, something overwhelming, big news. But events were happening too quickly,

— the staccato hammering of situation after situation, the Manchurian affair, army bill, rice scandal, Diet fights, police charges, rumors and revelations, farmer revolts and riots in the cities, all became a conglomerate chaos of excitement, a whirl of incidents flickering by with dizzily shifting changes, making concentration on any one of them almost impossible. Like the nation in general, Kent found himself unable to maintain the high key of excited absorption; one became overwhelmed as if by a succession of great waves, one following so closely after the other that the mind, battered and bewildered, failing to register complete, clear impression of each one, became in reaction dulled, exhausted, almost apathetic. After all, this ubiquitous clamor, this constantly flickering and flashing of new heterogeneous pictures, produced finally but an impression of a stupendous blur; one became exhausted by the repetition of explosions of excitement, causing one to hold one's breath, nervously, in expectancy of some prodigious dénouement, a political deluge, that constantly impended but which always seemed to fall just short, to evaporate harmlessly as each happening became overshadowed by the occurrence of some new and astounding development.

It became necessary to remain almost constantly near the center of affairs, to be in readiness to snap up the news events with flashed forth with explosive suddenness, like lightning from a hovering thunder cloud. It became his custom to spend much of his time at the Imperial Hotel. It was close to the Diet building, the Foreign Office, the central police station, and when things were quiet, when there was nothing to do but wait, he enjoyed the atmosphere, the feeling of remoteness from the humdrum surroundings of everyday modernity, which was conveyed to him by this enormous structure of fantastic masonry where genius had

contrived to work out in permanencies of stone and bronze the delicate and ephemeral fancies of an opulent dream image. Resting in a remote corner among the myriad corniced recesses which gave on the spacious vestibule, his eye found constant delight in the intricacy of detail, embroidery-like stone pillar, fretwork and balustrades, gilded mortar binding together complicated interlacing designs; the flood of colors of rugs and cushions — browns, ocher, terracotta and maroon, and blues, ultra-marine, lapis lazuli, indigo — in a riot of shadings and combinations, and all of it, colors and contours, blended into a great harmonious whole, impressive, inspiring, so it seemed almost a sacrilege that this mirage-like brilliance should be profaned by the comings and goings of mere hotel guests and townsfolk bent on prosaic concerns of business.

In the afternoon, at tea time, it was especially pleasant, when the Russian orchestra played. Flicker of color of butterfly-winged kimonos would animate the scene with a glimmer of exotic rich life. They really fitted into the picture, these young girls of the Japanese aristocracy, with their undulating, polychromatic textures, and when the music lent itself to the forming of a picture, some symphony or bit of opera, one might dream oneself surrounded by an Arabian Nights setting, or a scene from "Aïda."

Here one might meet every one who counted at all in the ultra-modern life of Tokyo, foreigners and Japanese, business men, newspapermen, young fellows from the embassies, in the bar; and, upstairs, in the lobby or in Peacock Alley, the women at tea. Kent often saw the Suzuki girls there. Kimiko seemed happy enough, showed no trace of the incident which had brought her to him. But he came principally for the chance that it afforded him to see Sylvia.

It had been a strenuous afternoon, but a disappointing one. A stormy scene had been expected in the Diet. He had sat in the gallery for hours, listening to dreary debate, hoping that momentarily something would happen; had made the rounds of the Foreign Office, newspaper offices, even the lair of old Viscount Kikuchi — but nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Now the Diet had adjourned until the following morning; the crowds had dispersed. He was glad to see Sylvia alone at one of the tables overlooking the inner court.

"You're just the one I want to see. It's been a maddening day; lots of work and no results. May I sit with you?"

"Of course, but I'm afraid I cannot be with you long, although, as a matter of fact, I'm trying to make a sort of a meal here. I'm off on an expedition of my own, and I shall have no dinner until late, midnight maybe."

An expedition. He urged her not to be mysterious. She soon gave in. After all, it was entirely professional. She intended to go to the great Nichiren temple at Ikegami, a few miles from Tokyo. It would be full moon and she had always had an idea that there might be a picture there for her, some fantastic harmonious blending of contour of gnarled pines, curved temple roofs, which might be enhanced, softened, etherealized by moonbeam glamor.

"I'm not at all sure that there will be a picture there, at least not for me. I may not be able to get enough color out of it; but I want the experience, anyway, the eeriness of the hundreds of old graves in the cryptomeria shadows. I have been wanting to go for a long time; so to-night I'm going."

The idea appealed to him instantly. "I wish you'd let me come with you."

"I'm afraid it might be rather unconventional, would it not?" she hesitated.

"It would be still more unconventional if you went alone. You should have an escort. I shan't disturb you. I promise you that I shall be as dumb and unobtrusive as your walking-stick; but, really, I do wish you would let me come along."

She looked at him reflectively. He wondered what thoughts were forming behind these fine, black eyes; the desire to go with her, which had been only an inspirational whim, took deeper hold. She must let him come. He leaned forward earnestly. She smiled. "Very well, then. I suppose you might as well come; but remember, I shall be at work; I shall want to think, to absorb. You must be as you promised, just inanimate, a block of wood."

He promised hastily, curiously noting in himself a feeling of trembling pleasure. They finished their tea and took the electric train to Omori.

Twilight was falling when they reached the village. They walked through narrow winding lanes, past tall bamboo fences enclosing spacious gardens, came to the open country, rice fields, scattered groups of houses clustered on tree-clad hills. In the gathering shadows crickets were tuning up for their serenades; the moon, rising from behind the pine groves on the Ikegami ridge, bathed the landscape with soft luminosity.

As they climbed the long broad stone stairway leading up to the temple heights, they heard the monotonous euphony of a chant. At a minor shrine close to the entrance a priest was engaged in some ceremonial. As they stood by the stone foxes guarding the entrance to the small court fronting it, they could see his vested figure, kneeling, facing the dimly illuminated gorgeousness of gilt, and brocade, and lacquer, a



glimpse of resplendent Oriental opulence devoted to mysterious, age-old rites.

They passed on. The rest of the temple grounds lay in darkness, illuminated sparingly by a few faint electric lights, irritatingly modern amidst all the ancient buildings, lofty cryptomerias, crumbling tombs. They passed along the broad stone-paved path, smoothed by wear of feet of generations of worshipers, under the massive, towering crimson gateway leading into the inner court. Here was a plateau on the hilltop, whence ran on all sides corrugations of ridges and valleys, set with hundreds of graves, carved stone monuments, lichened sepulchers, broodingly silent in the shadows of fantastically gnarled pine limbs.

The main temple buildings were closed. The wide court was bathed in moonlight, brilliant, white, setting out in strong relief every detail of contour of curved roof, carved pillars, bronze figures anachronistically finding in their midst a battered rapid-fire gun, trophy from the Russian War. But it was all too brightly visible, too plainly seen; the eeriness, the nebulous awe of obscure mystery, lay beyond, all about them, among the graves in the shadows of the pines.

From the right of the courtyard, near the gateway, a pathway ran, straight as a sword, penetrating into the heart of the pine grove, a chasm of opalescent light, a shimmery gorge of white brilliance in abrupt contrast to the almost solid walls of blackness, leading like a fantastically contrived magic road to a pagoda, which closed it, with intricately carved roof set upon roof, rising with slender elegance towards the dark sapphire heavens. It formed a picture, but strange, eccentrically unusual, without color — pale, shimmery, pearly — set against ebony blackness. It seemed to him that it would be impossible to express it through the ordinary media of the brush; as if it might be worked out

only by some odd special process, mother-of-pearl and teak; but even then it would lose the peculiar scintillating brilliance which seemed to make even the blackness luminous.

He looked at the girl, wondering what she was getting out of it. She was entirely absorbed, eyes intent, frowning in thought, perplexity. She shook her head. "No. Come."

They crossed the courtyard, found a path leading behind one of the main buildings and an old, crumbling edifice, rotting, giving forth moldy odor of decay. It led down into a lower stratum of ridges and gullies, slippery flags laid between mounds and hillsides, twisting and turning, with stone stairways, leading upwards, downwards, among thousands of ancient burial plots. Over it all lay the murky shadows of cryptomeria, slashed here and there by bright streaks of pale moonlight. The silence seemed uncannily brooding, ominously oppressive, riven only by spasmodic droning booms from a great brass bell, somewhere deep in the shadows behind them, reverberating shiveringly through the shadows.

It was as if they were enveloped in an atmosphere of the supernatural, as if they had willfully intruded into a realm of ghosts and specters, a scene set for mysterious *danse macabre*-like rites, rash beings possessed of the ephemeral spark of life of the moment interfering with their puny inconsequential presence in this, the realm of those who had held sway here for centuries.

She had taken his arm; now she was clinging to him closely. He could feel her shivering nervously. The feeling was infectious, crept over him irritatingly. He brought himself together. "Come, you are getting nervous. Let us rest for a moment before going on."

He led her up a stairway leading to the top of a

small eminence, an enclosure surrounded by a low stone balustrade, evidently the private burial place of some family of the nobility of remote medieval days. In the open space surrounded on all sides by blackness the illumination seemed almost dazzling, brilliantly white, with a spotlight effect, enhancing the sense of unearthliness, remoteness from the world of material things.

They found a fallen stone pillar and seated themselves. She remained silent, staring out into this spectral ghost world, the fantastic eccentricities of shapes and contours, where everything was black and white only, like a gigantic etching. He, watching her, became absorbed in turn. He was pleased that she fitted into the scene, even into the Oriental setting, a filmy silk shawl lending a kimono-like effect, her great pile of raven hair suggestive of the high Japanese coiffure. Whimsically, out of nowhere, came the idea to him: thank providence, she was not a blonde! It would have spoiled the effect which she was now producing — fine, clear profile, pale features, black hair blending into the picture formed by mass-grown monuments, great carved lanterns, outlined sharply in the suffusion of moonlight.

The whole thing seemed unreal, as if they had found themselves suddenly in a world centuries removed from that in which they usually moved, as if they had become participants in an elfin play, were on the brink of the enacting of something supernatural, some mid-summer night's dream fancy, or a dance of specters; as if they might expect momentarily to hear some unseen goblin orchestra strike into an overture of tinkling bluebells, insect violins, bumblebee bassoons, murmur of night wind, leading them, this girl and himself, into some scene of dreamlike phantasy in which they had fortuitously become the main characters.

What a setting for romance! These surroundings, this girl, this wonder of pure, harmonious perfection! Somehow, he felt that it would be impossible to create again this same effect, that it could not be consciously contrived merely by coming to this place any moonlight night with the determination, purposely, of summoning the spell. There came to him a feeling that this could be attained only once in a lifetime, that he was impassively, fatuously failing to seize the immeasurably rare opportunity —

Opportunity for what? He shook himself together. He was becoming moonstruck. After all, this girl — She did not notice his gaze. It was fascinating to watch her, the infinitely fine play of light in her eyes, her impatient frown in concentration of thoughts which were almost palpable, visible. And yet, what did she think? It occurred that in the same manner he had speculated as to the thoughts which might lurk behind the white brows of Kimiko-san, Sadako-san and the rest. How different they must be; fine, dream-like, exotic, quaint as might be the ideas of those girls, would not the glamor thereof, the ephemeral delicacy, fade as one became familiar with them, become commonplace, irritatingly trite after wear of years of association? Here, on the other hand, was a brain capable of absorbing the most subtle and evasive expressions of life, existence in its varied manifestations, of shaping them into concrete, lasting form, creative, a mind like one's own, or even more capable, which would grow, develop like an unfolding blossom, presenting ever new beauties and richness in years of life together.

Without conscious thought, acting entirely on impulse, he leaned towards her. She looked at him, awakened suddenly from her reverie. "I must be poor company," she smiled. "But then, you know, I

told you beforehand. It is all so bewildering, puzzling to me. I can see the pictures here, the dazzlingly wonderful potentialities which lie right here before me, about me; and yet I can't get hold of it. It eludes me entirely. It is the lack of color, I think, the predominance of light and shadow effects, black and white. It is not for me, I'm afraid. This is a subject for some great etcher, for some kind of a Klinger or Boeklin composition; and yet one would have to get in these elusive opalescent tints, these evasive iridescences. It is very disappointing, to feel it all so far beyond one's capabilities; and yet I have enjoyed it so much. I have let it get away with me. But now it must be late. Come," she took his hand simply, confidently. "We must be going home. You must forgive me if I have let the moonlight run away with my thoughts. But didn't you feel something like that too? Did you not feel coming to you dreams, visions that, even though they must fade away and lose their evanescence, will still continue to live in some form, to take shape in one's life."

He did not answer. The dream was already beginning to concentrate, to solidify into definite form of thought, purpose. He wondered whether it were possible that she might divine, by some subtle woman's intuition, the inspiration which was now growing into tangible form of a wish, deliberate pursuance of desire, that now finally he was sure that she was the woman whom he had been awaiting, that he had come to the end of his seeking.

## CHAPTER XIX

"Thank God, that's over," said Butterfield. "If there's anything much more deadly than the banquets of the Nippon-Columbia Society, I don't want to see it."

They had come down from the banquet hall in the Imperial Hotel, a group of correspondents, Kittrick, Kent, Butterfield and Templeton, with Roberts, just arrived from New York to gather material for a series of magazine articles; Sands, an engineer who had something to do with the new subway, and one or two others. At one end of Peacock Alley they found a table where they might observe the crowd, the men coming down here to meet the women who had dined below in the main dining room, Japanese and foreigners mingling, concentrating in little groups about the guests of honor, an eminent engineer from America, a Cabinet member from Washington, and a couple of Congressmen of whom no one in Tokyo had heard until they arrived in Japan, unofficially, of course, it was given out, but as "Ambassadors of Friendship," as the newspapers called them.

Butterfield was still grouching. "Here I've been to dozens of these affairs, and I wonder if I'll ever come away from one without a bad taste in my mouth. It makes me sick, all this fulsomeness. Take to-night, Barry talking as if the Japanese were the only engineers in the world, as if they had invented the steam engine, electricity, telephones, radio and all that. Here Japan is suffering so badly from swelled head that the best service one may do her is to tell her the

truth, for her own good, and still whenever we have distinguished visitors here, they always insist on making asses of themselves. Barry is a pleasant enough, kindly old ass, but, heavens, the only way I could stand his speech to-night was by watching Matthews. He has in one way or another been behind half the things that Barry was lauding our Japanese friends for. Did you see his face? It was the only fun I got out of it all, seeing Matthews' face getting redder and redder. I thought he'd have a fit. But all the rest of it honestly gets my goat; the main table, with old Count Ibara sitting through the speeches waiting for the time when he'll have a chance to spring his eternal story about his college days with President Wilson. I can stand on my head and write a complete report of these meetings as they were ten years ago, as they will be ten years from now; old Baron Nishida leads off with "Perry's Black Ships" and everlasting love for America. Eminent American stands up and talks of Bushido—I have lived here ten years, and I've yet to hear Bushido mentioned by a Japanese; it's as dead as the rules of knighthood with us—more Eminent Americans tell the Japanese how wonderful they are. Why the devil is it that when an American comes here, he must almost invariably make a fool of himself? Of course, the trouble is often that they are generally mediocrities who become all puffed up at the attentions they get here; and then we do send out such asses. Do you remember the Congressional Party some years ago? The men acted like clodhoppers, and their women were worse. That's where the Japanese are wiser than we are. When they let any one represent them, officially or semi-officially, abroad, they hand-pick them, send only the best they have, and our people at home get a wonderful idea of the advanced stage of Japan. That's how half the

good spirit towards Japan was built up at the Washington Conference; they sent their best men in the entourage of the delegation, who chummed with our newspapermen and writers; the best kind of advertising.

"But we let loose third-rate Congressmen, ebullient business men, who let Japanese hospitality get to their heads and proceed to slobber all over the landscape. I wouldn't mind if it were not for the fact that just as we in America judge the Japanese people from the Japanese who make a splash there, thus the Japanese judge us Americans from the kind of specimens who come over here and spill their foolishness as these fellows did to-night. We Americans ought to have a censorship here to prevent visiting notables from making speeches which have not been carefully edited."

"But what do you come here for then, if you dislike it so?" It was Roberts, the magazine man. "Why do you belong to the Society at all if you think it does no good?"

"But I don't say that. I admit it does good. Anything does that brings Americans and Japanese together in a friendly way. But what I object to is the effervescence of our visitors. I think it is proper that we should be courteous, cordial, friendly towards the Japanese, but what's the use of telling them that we think they love us, when we know darned well they don't. That old chap at the left of Barry tried some time ago in the Privy Council to have the *Japan American* suppressed for no reason except that it had translated some embarrassing editorials from a Japanese paper. The business premises of Americans are ransacked by the police and accusations are constantly being made that 'a certain nation' is cramming this country with spies; some of our most prominent en-



gineering firms are having their business seriously interfered with because of constant 'spy' charges. They have no use for us, and they have no use for England. They think we euchred them at the Washington Conference. They feel that when we called off on militarism, we did away with the one chance which Japan had to be a great nation. They have no use for us big nations who, they feel, are constantly interfering with the development of the policies they would like to pursue in Asia. Mind you, I believe in being friendly — it's indefensible to stir up needless trouble between America and Japan — but I don't believe in slopping over, and I think it is right to let them know that we know jolly well how they feel about us. The funny thing is, Roberts, and every man who has lived here any time will tell you the same, that just as sentiment in America towards Japan has become more and more friendly since the Washington Conference, in the same ratio Japanese sentiment is becoming unfriendly towards America. It may be largely the doings of the militarists. Possibly they're the ones who are egging the police on with these eternal spy scares. It may be part of their plans to counteract the general agitation for army reduction; to justify an army, there must be a potential enemy, and America is the most obvious one. So put it down to the militarists, if you like. They're the official goat, anyway."

"Yes, that's the popular game to-day, cussing the militarists," cut in Kent. "Still, you know, I can see their point of view even if, God knows, I condemn their methods. Look here, there's no use denying that just one thing made Japan great, her army and navy. Take them away, and the other Powers would put her in the class of, say, Spain. Now we have decreed that hereafter we will measure nations by industrial

and commercial greatness, and the Japanese see that they're being left way behind. The militarists see that Japan can remain great only in the same way as she became great, by the sword. Now, it's probably sure enough that they have given up the old idea of an offensive outside of Asia; but what I think they are working up to is establishing a line of defense to the eastward, and once that's complete, they will be ready to do as they please in Asia; probably they feel that we won't easily be led into war against them, anyway.

"And it seems plain that they must go into the continent of Asia. That's where they must get raw materials for their industries which they haven't at home. That's the only place to which we'll let them emigrate ——"

"Oh, hell, don't spring that worn-out theory of Japan's overflowing," interrupted Templeton. "As Japan industrializes, she'll take care of her population; and there's still room in Japan for lots of additional people. Premier Hara himself told me once that there was room for millions in Hokkaido alone."

"Sure," Kent flashed back. "Just as there's lots of room in America for the Americans. We don't have to emigrate, and still we would resent it, wouldn't we, if we were told that we couldn't go where we pleased. Here Japan sees her friends, America and Great Britain, possessing enormous tracts that lie idle for want of settlers — take Australia, for instance, where they are yelling for immigrants, and still they won't let the Japanese in — and while the Japanese would like to go there, and would develop these lands highly, as we all know, we tell them no, stay home in icy Hokkaido. You talk about worn-out theories, Templeton; what about that old stuff about Japanese driving out the whites wherever they enter.

How is a nation of less than sixty millions going to swarm all over America and Australia and the rest of the earth. They may breed like rabbits, but they would have to breed like herrings to do that. And, anyway, even if we must keep them from immigrating into America in masses — as we ought to keep out the hordes of low class Latins and Slavs, people a sight lower than the Japanese, whom we have let overrun our country — we might be less offensive about it. We all know that what makes Japan sore is not the fact that she can't send her surplus over to America; the Japanese Government wants them to go west, not east, in fact; but it's the insult to her race pride, the circumstance that a Doctor Takamine, a Doctor Kitisato, people who rank among the best brains in the world, can't become American citizens, should they wish to do so; but under our laws we can give citizenship to Kaffirs and Hottentots, anything that's black and comes out of Africa.

"You're looking into conditions in the Far East, Roberts. Take a look at that angle of the question. We, the Anglo-Saxons, insist on holding the Oriental down. We say that's not because we think he's lower than we are, but what are mere words? We're judged by our actions. Now, you notice how the Japanese papers every now and then break out with Pan-Asia propaganda, calling for a combination of the peoples of China, of India, of all Asia, to stand together against the White, under Japan's 'hegemony,' as they put it. If you'd been here at the time Kemal Pasha was telling England to go to Hades, you would have noticed how the Japanese press applauded him; here, they boasted joyfully, was finally an Asiatic defying the Anglo-Saxon, the Christian, and getting away with it. We're bringing it upon ourselves. Japan has lost lots of chances in the past to become the leader of

Asia, but she may become so yet; and that's what I think may be the militarist policy; either they aspire to hold Japan in readiness to lead the rest of Asia, or they may simply be preparing for the next time Europe and America are too busy elsewhere to watch Asia, and then take what they want in Manchuria and Mongolia. When you look upon all these things in the light that the Japanese militarist looks upon them, you can, at least, understand what he's driving at. I'm not a jingo. War between Japan and America would be the most silly, the most damnable thing you can think of; but I don't think we are using the best methods to avoid it. Instead of going so strong on the brotherhood stuff, hands across the seas and empty words, we should try to understand Japan a little better. As it is, I'm sure that the nation at large, the Government as represented by the Foreign Office, for instance, wants only friendship; but you must remember that the General Staff is still running things to a large extent, and is there any one of you who doesn't think they do not expect war with us sometime, sooner or later?"

"Suppose they do," Sands, the engineer, leaned forward. "What hope can they have of success? The next war will be fought in the air, they say, and there Japan is helpless. We run regular air-mail services from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The Japanese have not as yet been able to stage a mail flight between Tokyo and Osaka, a few hundred miles, without having participants dropping to earth. The Japanese have no machine sense; they can run an engine when it's running smoothly, but they're at sea in an emergency. That's why they're always tumbling down with their airplanes. And modern war depends on industrial organization, ability to work up and maintain tremendous outputs of material. Japan simply hasn't the

ability to do that. She'd be beaten on that point alone."

"You may be right, Sands," Kittrick took up the argument. "But it is not a question of war just now or for some years to come, thank God. The next point of difference, I take it, will be the racial equality question that has been smoldering ever since the Paris Conference. And that's just where the world has been treating Japan wrong, granting national equality, but not racial. It should be just the opposite. I'm willing to grant any moment that racially the Japanese is as good as we are and a sight better than lots of the white scum we admit to citizenship, but nationally, no, sir; as long as Japan is run as she is at present, with militarists capable of and quite willing to break the nation's international pledges, no matter how sincere the diplomats may or may not be in making them, just so long do I object to national equality. The individual Japanese may be quite as good intrinsically as we are, but the present system is not bringing out his capabilities, and to contend that Japan is as great a nation as America or England is plain rot."

"So you would want to admit Japanese to American citizenship?" asked Roberts.

"Only after they had assimilated American training and ideals; but that is just the point; as they are here in Japan I don't think they're fit for citizenship of any country, any more than are the low-class Europeans we import; but I contend that they are just as capable of assimilation as are any other nationals. There's a bird here in Tokyo who used to be in charge of the school system in Hawaii where forty per cent. of the school children are Japanese, and he tells me that these kiddies, under American training, are becoming as capable, as honest and as loyal Americans as are any children under the flag, white, black or brown.

The American-trained Japanese is as efficient as we are; the Japanese-trained Japanese is ineffective; it takes four or five of them to do the work that a white man can do. It all shows that the fault lies with the government here, the whole system. There's nothing the matter with the Japanese; he's the same, mentally and morally as the rest of us, with a few virtues such as cleanliness and industry thrown in, but you have to take him away from the atmosphere here, of incapacity, deceit, graft, the spirit that is exemplified by their proverb: "*Uso wa Nihon no takara.*"

"What's that, what's that?" Roberts had been taking it all in anxiously.

"Oh, it's simply a proverb to the effect that lies, deceit, craft, whatever you may choose to call it, is the treasure of Japan. It's a fine sentiment for a proverb, isn't it? Still it's fairly typical of the situation. In fact, I think that that point, the fact that Japan regards falsehood, deceit, in a light far more lenient than we do, accounts more than anything else for the feeling of racial difference between us. The average Japanese does not greatly mind being caught in a lie; it conveys no distinct sense of shame to him; it's simply a difference in ethical viewpoint, just as the Japanese look with abhorrence on some of our ethical shortcomings, our comparatively scant respect for old age, and all that—but it's the variant in Japanese character which we find it the hardest to understand."

"You claim then that all Japanese are liars, to put it tersely?" insisted Roberts.

"Not by a long sight. I know Japanese whose word is as good to me as that of any white man. Of some of the big men and big firms you might even say that their word is better than their bond; they'd rather be generous than merely just, and the Japanese is far from being a piker. There are lots of abso-

lutely truthful Japanese just as there are lots of whites who are thorough-going liars. But you might say that whereas with the white man we take it for granted that he tells the truth until we find out that he's a liar, with the Japanese one's inclined to take it for granted that he's a liar until one learns the contrary. It may be a blunt way of putting it, but it's the best I can do; and I think that once the Japanese come to adopt our ethical point of view in this respect, the same as they have adopted so many material things from us, the greatest bar between the races will be removed.

"I should like to see it removed. I like the Japanese, and even if I do realize that they don't like us, I can't greatly blame them. I feel that we must appear arrogant to them, even when we are trying to produce the feeling of quality — possibly even more so then — and so many whites, especially among our own newcomers here, are beastly trying. When I see our drummers and flappers, just off the ships, sitting in trains, pointing at and commenting about Japanese men and women, careless of the fact or not knowing that many of these people speak foreign languages, I feel resentment myself, and I can understand what the Japanese must feel. They have their faults and their scandals, but are they worse on the whole than are ours? They treat us better here than we treat them in America. I rave and rant at them as much as do the rest of you; and yet, when it comes right down to the point, I like them, and I wish them well, at least the people, the great masses, the real nation, and I am sorry when I see the country shooting down-grade, power going, wealth, industry, commerce, all going, I feel it is a great pity. I want to see some great man come and lead them out of this wilderness, some one like the great Meiji — but, where is he?"

"But what about the Prince Regent, then?" Rob-

erts was using his opportunity for copy. "He ——"

Kittrick leaned forward to him, outstretched arm upsetting the liquor glass before him. "So sorry, old man. Here, boy-san, quick, wipe up this mess and get another glass for Mr. Roberts." He waited until the boy had left them. "Really, Roberts, it seemed a rude thing to do, but you simply must not talk about the Imperial House in front of these boys, who like as not are in the pay of the Foreign Office or the police. Possibly what you were going to say might have been all right, but I was afraid to take the chance. Remember this is in many respects the Land of the Free far more than our own United States. We can drink what we please and have far more personal liberty in thousands of ways. You can even cuss the government quite freely as long as you don't preach Communism, or Sovietism, or that kind of rot; but, when it comes to mention of the Imperial House, they stand for no nonsense. It's the law of the land. It's safest to keep quiet."

The crowd in Peacock Alley was passing away, up the stairways to the ballroom. The rest of the men followed; Kittrick and Roberts were alone for the moment. "But just tell me this," the magazine man was noted for his insistence. "What do you, from what you hear, think about it? What are the chances, in your opinion, of the Prince Regent becoming a second Meiji?"

"My dear man, I have no more idea about it than if I lived in Lima. The pitifully few points we do know are hopeful. When he returned from England, the police, according to the old rule, forbade cheering; but the crowd cheered, anyway, for the first time in history, and it was quite plain that the Prince Regent liked it. Then, a little later, when the crowd at Kyoto broke through the cordons and came closer than had



been ordained, he remained with it longer than the set time. The mayor resigned, "took the responsibility" as they call it; but the point is that the Prince Regent was immensely pleased.

"That's about all I know that's of significance. Pitifully meager, isn't it? But the fact is that we know less of what is really going on inside Tokyo palace walls than we do about the holy of holies in Lhasa. What are the influences surrounding the ruler of Japan, modern or reactionary, sixteenth century or twentieth century? It is possible that the entire future of Japan, of the Far East, depends on just that one thing — and yet we don't know a blessed thing about it, I, the rest of the correspondents, any one, in fact. No one knows, except the infinitely narrow and secretive circle of the highest officials. The Prince Regent is seen at official functions, he sees foreigners, entirely formally, quite occasionally, but outside of the scant official announcements which give no real information at all, the world knows nothing. When you think of our present-day news facilities, cables, wireless, and the rest, it seems impossible, incredible, that we shouldn't know a little, have some slight idea; but it remains, to my mind at least, the biggest and the most fascinating mystery in the world. If any country ever stood at the crossroads, if any country ever needed a great man to lead it, that's Japan to-day. Will the Prince Regent be a second Meiji?" He threw his hands wide. "Go and find out, and you'll have one of the biggest stories of the year."

Kent came over to them. "I say, aren't you chaps coming upstairs?" They went up together, to the ballroom where dancing had already begun, and stood near the entrance watching the dancers.

"An odd scene, isn't it, this combination of East and West," commented Roberts. "They actually

do seem graceful with their wonderful, fanciful kimonos. Look at this girl just passing us. Can they really dance?"

"Can a duck swim? That young lady is Miss Kimiko Suzuki, a special friend of Kent's." Kittrick turned towards Kent. "Roberts is just admiring your friend, Miss Kimiko ——" But Kent was not listening. He had noticed Sylvia coming towards them and stepped forward to meet her. "I was hoping to see you here. You know, I haven't seen you since that night at Ikegami."

"I am just on my way to find some cool place." He followed her as she went towards the stairway. "There's such a crush in here, and I am rather tired, anyway."

They found a nook, balcony-like, discreetly tucked away in the labyrinth of porticoes and passages, overhanging a court with a long stone-set pool, whose jet-black, surface, lacquer-like, gave back glimmering reflection of the stars. A few commonplaces; then they fell silent. He reflected how odd it was that with this girl he obtained complete satisfaction, the delicious feeling of absolute content, superlative well-being, by merely being in her presence. Strains of a waltz air came down to them, softened, etherealized by distance, intertwined with the sound from a fountain plashing into the pool, monotonous, hypnotic. She was leaning forward, cheek pillowed on one hand, the other lying on the balustrade. He took it between his, held it, without definite forethought, intention; somehow, it seemed just the natural thing to do — and apparently it seemed so to her, too; she let it rest there; merely looked at him softly, dreamily, hardly even questioning. He knew that he would make love to her, would ask her to marry him; ideas, words began to stir about, moving as if in a jumble

in his mind, trying to form themselves into phrases; but they refused to shape themselves into tangible, definite sentences, and he felt as if they were hardly necessary. They were in the perfect accord, attunement, that rendered words superfluous. Of course, he must say them some time, later in the evening, in a few minutes, perhaps, but now, just now, he wished merely to sit like this, enjoying the sense of their coming together, fusion, love, brought about perfectly, disdainful of the crude medium of words.

But a mumble of voices could be heard among the pillars behind them. A group passed, unseen, chattering, below. Hurried footsteps rang along the tiles. He roused himself. "Sylvia ——"

The footsteps had come right up to them. "Here, Kent." It was Karsten; of all men one would have thought that he at least would have had more tact. But he rushed right up to them heedlessly, blunderingly. "Kent, I've been hunting high and low for you. Kikuchi is waiting for you in his auto at the side entrance to take you to the cable office. Big news. Beat it. Don't bother about your hat or stick. I don't know what it is, but it's big news. For God's sake, hurry," he was propelling him down the hallway now. "I'll look after Miss Elliott for you in the meanwhile; only move."

As he peered into the automobile standing at the side entrance, hands seized him and dragged him in. "Kyubashi post-office, quick." It was Kikuchi's voice giving directions to the chauffeur. "Kent, old man, I'm giving you the beat of the year. Mito, the Premier, was assassinated less than half an hour ago. I happened to be at my father's house when they notified him. The cable office closes in fifteen minutes. The news isn't out yet. You have a chance to beat the world. You did me a favor with Kimiko-

san, though probably you may not have realized it. I'm trying to pay you back now."

"Mito, assassinated!" By the gods, the biggest story out of Japan since the stabbing of Premier Hara. "But what are the details, Kikuchi? For God's sake, tell me all you know."

"Nothing much is known yet, though it seems more sinister than the Hara case. Mito was shot at the entrance of his official residence. A volley, not a single shot, was fired through the board fence opposite. They had made loopholes in it. They claim that there must have been half a dozen of them, at least. No, no one has been caught. Yes, he's dead as a door-nail. That's all I know. Well, here we are. I'll wait for you. Be quick."

His hand almost shook as he drafted his message, sending it at urgent rates, by both wireless and cable to America, and by cable to the London office, for luck. As he filed his stuff, he noted with satisfaction that the clerks were getting ready to leave. His would be the last message to get through that night. He had beaten the world.

He reëntered the hotel with the feeling of a conqueror, that he must succeed in whatever he undertook. He would see Sylvia again presently, just as soon as he had had a look in the ballroom, at the other correspondents, to make sure that they were still in ignorance. He sauntered up to Kittrick. He and Templeton were chatting idly. He joined them. So far the news was not out. But as they stood there, he noticed Butterfield in eager conversation with some Japanese. Now he glanced about, left the hall hurriedly. Now the Japanese was talking to Carew, editor of the *Japan American*, and Carew also suddenly became active, febrile, as if he had received an electric shock.

"Hallo, Carew, what's the rush?" Kent caught him as he was hastening past them. The editor glanced at his wrist-watch. "Past cable time, I see. I might as well tell you. The Premier was assassinated less than an hour ago. No, I have no details. I've got to hurry over to the shop. I'm going to look after this make-up myself."

Safe, by George! Still he said nothing to the others. They would find out soon enough that he had beaten them. But he wanted to bring his triumph to her, Sylvia, a conqueror with the spoils of victory. But on his way through Peacock Alley he met Karsten alone.

"Sorry, old man; I did the best I could to hold the lady, but I must be getting old, losing my grip, or what? Anyway, she did not seem to take to me as a substitute for you at all, acted sort of dumb, moon-struck — you acted in a sort of a dazed way, too, for that matter," he whistled provokingly. "What do you intend to do now, anyway; the night's still young."

"If you don't mind, I think I'll go home. Did you hear what the news was, about the assassination of Mito? Well, I scored a clean beat, as you may know. I want to get home and gloat comfortably, to enjoy my thoughts of my luck."

"Oh, what absolute liars newspapermen are." Karsten placed an arm affectionately about his shoulders. "I can't let you insult my intelligence by letting you think that I believe that. Kent, looking at you, I have wondered whether when, in my sinful past, I have been in love, I have looked so damned silly as that? It's wonderful; and whether you deny it or not, I'm going to open a bottle of Cliquot with you when we come home."

## CHAPTER XX

"And now," Karsten was laughing across his glass, "I take it that I'm not premature ——"

"But you are." Realization had suddenly flashed upon Kent that he had nothing to celebrate; he had accomplished nothing, had been brought no nearer a decision in his relationship with this girl. All this feeling of certainty, this sense of having won her, was entirely self-created, elation of auto-intoxication based on nothing tangible. He became instantly irritated. "Drop this horse-play, Karsten. I don't mind telling you I wish there were something to celebrate; but you spoiled it all, rushing in as you did. If you hadn't, I might now have known ——"

"Fiddlesticks, there's not a shadow of a doubt. Of course, I realized it the moment I rushed in upon you two, just what was about to pass; and after that, when I was alone with her after you had left, it was plain enough. I used to think I knew something about women; I'm certainly not mistaken now. And, Kent, old man, while I shall be sorry to lose you, I'm glad this has come about. I'm getting to be an old man. I have come to enjoy my sensations in respect to women vicariously, by watching others, men and women whom I like, and you won't mind my telling you that I've had not a little such vicarious pleasure through you, enjoying, at second hand, your experiences, what little you told me and what I might deduce and add thereto, with these Japanese girls; and, old man, I'm honestly glad that you are now finally coming to the end, and that it is not a Japanese girl."

"What!" He had not entirely liked Karsten's confession, had sensed a trace of annoyance that the other should thus have been watching him critically, as if he were some one more or less impersonal, detached, performing on a stage for his edification. But he forgot all this in his astonishment at this last pronouncement—coming from Karsten of all men. Why not a Japanese girl? "Why," he asked him the question. "Why not a Japanese? I thought you liked the Japanese?"

"For myself, yes; for you, no," Karsten laughed, filled his pipe, lit it. "You know there's a tremendous lot of talk and argument on the question of mixed marriages. People say this and they say that, and yet essentially I think the matter resolves itself into the question of what a man seeks in marriage, what he expects in the woman he joins himself with for life. It depends on whether a man loves with his intellect or whether he loves with his senses. You and I furnish good examples. You love essentially with your brain. Of course, you enjoy brilliance and color, beauty, charm, and all that; you saw them in these Japanese girls, and they fascinated you, entranced you. And that was what I was a little afraid of, that you might succumb to it, that you might suffer yourself to be overcome by this scintillating, ephemeral fascination of the exotic; for it would have been fatal for you; the newness is bound to wear off; and what you look for in marriage, the thing in a woman which can hold you, is intellect. You want beauty, charm, of course, but for you the great essential thing is brains, a woman who can be a companion, a comrade, who can have all your interests in common with you. That's the only kind of a relation that may be lasting in your case.

"Now take my own. I love essentially with my

senses. Of course, I want a woman with sense, intelligence; a fool would irritate me immeasurably; I have no patience with fools; but I would be just as intolerant with what we may call the 'trained intellect' in a woman who was my constant companion. I enjoy that, greatly even, when I chance across it in other women; but in the case of my own woman, the one with me always, I want no arguments, no discussions in respect to my own essential intellectual pursuits and interests. Bluntly, I want to supply all the brains for the household. It's intolerant, of course, but that's how I am. What I want is not a woman who'll discuss politics, or Freud, or Relativity with me. I want one whom I may enjoy as I do a picture, music, fragrance. Of course, you see that I don't mean mere physical enjoyment — the man who marries for that is obviously a fool — but what I'm trying to drive at is that I enjoy woman companionship through esthetic impressions, through the visions and dreams that her presence, her loveliness, her charm, her womanliness, bring to me, not through ideas or debates. And that's why in my case I felt that I might find happiness best with a Japanese, who might be all of these things to me, playmate, doll, companion, picture — everything but an encyclopedia or text-book on philosophy. And I had it, Kent. I had all that — with Jun-san — I have told you. My God, those were years of happiness. But it was too perfect. I thought I had life all solved for me, that I had finally gained serenity, peace; that I was about to accomplish something worth while — and then," he picked up his glass, smashed it deliberately into the brass bowl for pipe litter, "then to have it all smashed, like that — and by my own son!"

"Your son," Kent leaned forward, hands gripping chair arms. "Your son! You don't mean Mortimer?"



"He's the only son I have, isn't he?" Karsten had been pacing the floor; now he turned, facing Kent, glaring. "I didn't mean to tell you; but now you know it. Of course, I mean Mortimer."

"But it's impossible, it's absurd, it's preposterous, Karsten, man; you don't mean to say that you've been wrecking your life over such an insane fever fancy as that?"

"Fancy, hell! It's good enough in you, Kent, to stick up for the boy, to believe it impossible; but, hang it, man, I saw it with my own eyes."

"By the gods, Karsten, you lie." He had jumped up, flung the challenge into his face, eyes flashing, lips parted.

"I don't take that from any man, Kent." Karsten's fist flung backwards in swing for attack. Kent faced him, left arm on guard. For a moment they stood facing each other, glaring, then Karsten's fist dropped, he relaxed, flung wide his hands. "Oh, what's the use, Kent. I'm sorry. It is good of you to stick up for the boy; but, I tell you, I know. Let us drop this, old man. Finish. Let us have a drink and say no more about it."

"No, hold on." Kent had dropped into his chair and sat there, chin resting in cupped hand, the other stretched towards Karsten in a gesture warding off interruption. "Karsten, you know I'm not trying to probe into this just out of idle curiosity; but I have an idea. I wonder — Now I want you to tell me exactly, in every detail, just what you did see, the whole thing."

"But what good can it do? Do you think I enjoy this? Oh, very well, then," he shrugged his shoulders. "Since you seem so curiously set on it, I'll tell you."

"It happened when Mortimer came to Japan to visit

me for a few months when he was through college, before he went to Europe. Of course, I was living with Jun-san then, but he didn't know it. She was living in her cottage, just as she is now. I'm sure he suspected nothing. Of course, I couldn't have him suspect. It was easy enough. Then one night I came home late, and sat in the garden for a while, and then I saw it. They were both in her cottage. I could see their shadows against the paper of the *shoji*, sharply cut, silhouetted as in a shadow play; there was no room for doubt; and then I saw him advance and place his arm about her neck, and the two heads melted into one. My God, wasn't that enough! Do you think I would want to wait and see more, to stand passively and contemplate a love scene between her, my woman, who was as much wife to me as if we had gone through a thousand ceremonials, and my son, my own son? No, I ran out there into the temple grounds. I sat down and I thought; and I walked up and down, and thoughts, and ideas, and every sort of inspiration of madness passed in and out of my mind. One moment I wanted to rush in and confront them, tear them apart, throw them out, humiliate them, kill her. I learned that night what it was to be mad, crazy, insane. I wanted to do a thousand things, and at the same time I felt utterly helpless, that there was nothing I could do. In my imagination I could see them, Jun-san and Mortimer, my love and my son, in each other's arms, kissing, embracing. But what could I do? Surely I couldn't rush in and say, 'Here, Mortimer, that's my woman you have stolen.' The whole thing was impossible, a sardonically grotesque masque contrived for my utter humiliation by some demoniacal, superbly malicious fate. I even worked myself up to believing, or at least half believing, that this was a sort of retribution, punishment for my irregularities,

for my fool play with women in the past, just as our Puritan forefathers might have done. Yes, I was on the verge of being crazy, actually, pathologically insane, that night. But I came finally to a conclusion, the only logical conclusion — there was nothing for me to say or do; it simply marked the end with me for women in my life. So in the early morning I sneaked to my room; and a few weeks later Mortimer sailed for San Francisco; and I never said a word to him, or to Jun-san. So there you are. You see how it is. As our Japanese friends say, *shikataganai*; it can't be helped."

"And that was all you ever saw?" Kent's voice had become calmly cold, inquisitorial. "So that was all?"

"My God, wasn't that enough!" Karsten flung it at him irritably. "What more could you want? Did you expect me to play the rôle of spy on my son and my——? Honestly, now, you seem to have become absurdly dense."

But Kent had come up to him and was shaking him, laughing nervously after the fashion of one who has passed into the trembling relief of reaction after excitation of nervous strain. "Oh, Karsten-san, you big damn fool, with your pride of intellect and finesse of reasoning and all that; how much better it would have been for you if you had only reacted as would have a sailor, or a butcher, or a coal-heaver, if you had jumped in and had had it out on the spot. Now listen. I have the whole explanation. I can show you what an absurd, blundering fool you have been all these years — and I myself, here I've been going about with the key to the whole story, and I have seen how it was between Jun-san and you, and still I've never had the sense to tell you. What fools we are, all of us. Now listen ——

"On that night, the night all this happened, Mortimer had been to a cinema show, had he not?"

"I suppose so. As a matter of fact, he had; but what of that?" Karsten had caught the infection of excitement, suspense at impending revealment. His fingers were drumming on the table. "Don't sit there as if you were about to drag a rabbit out of a hat. Get down to essentials."

"Easy. That is essential. It all hinges on that. Mortimer had been to see one of those American films that had been censored by the police. He told me about it, after he had returned to San Francisco and was telling me about Japan. He thought it amusing, that just as the picture reached the climax, the point where the heroine, whoever she may have been, fell into the arms of the hero, there came a blur, and, presto, they were again six feet apart. The censor had cut out the kissing scene. As I say, he thought it intensely funny, the idea of an entire nation being kept from knowledge of kissing by a censor. And it worked, he told me. 'They really don't know what kissing is,' he said. For the idea had intrigued him. He had wondered; and when he came home and he happened to be telling about it to a pretty servant — that's what threw me off, his speaking of Jun-san as a servant; though, of course, I see now that that's how he must naturally have looked upon her —"

"For the good Lord's sake, man, don't babble so," the rat-tat-tat of Karsten's fingers seemed to crackle and snap like electricity. "Get to the point."

"I am. Keep quiet. Let me think, won't you? So it occurred to him that here was a chance where he might find out for himself, experiment. Nothing to get excited about, Karsten. We've both done as much. So he kept coming closer to her; just mischief, you know. It was plain she suspected nothing of the

kind, he told me. He got his arm about her neck. She didn't move. She was utterly astounded, struck aghast, transfixed in surprise. And then, when she did move, as he brought his lips close to her mouth, she didn't struggle, she didn't cuff his ears after Western fashion. She just placed her hands on his wrists and looked at him. It must have been impressive. He told me that he felt a greater sense of rebuff, of being ashamed of himself, than if she had struck him. And that's how he left her. That was all that happened. And here you've let that woman suffer for years, Karsten, and I never had the sense to —— ”

But Karsten had strode past him, was not listening. He flung open the sliding door at the head of the stairway. “Jun-san,” he was calling down into the dimness below. “Jun-san, come, come here right away.”

In her haste even the softness of her *zori* made a clatter on the stairs. She entered, breathless, wide-eyed in anxiety at the sudden call, stood astounded, staring at Karsten who was standing — arms stretched towards her.

Kent edged towards the door. They paid no attention to him. She was still standing there, trembling, lips parted, unable to believe. Now he had almost gained the door. It seemed unreal, like a theatrical situation, these two, in their trembling intensity.

“Erik-san, oh, Erik-san!” She was in Karsten's arms now, high hair-dress against his shoulder. As he slid the partition shut, Kent caught a glimpse of the man's head bending down towards her. It was dramatic, affecting. He caught his breath sharply, blinked his eyes, and at the same time the thought came to him, frivolously erratic — it was just like the cinema film; he had cut the picture at the very most intense moment.

## CHAPTER XXI

He sat up in bed in bewildered wonder whether it had been an actual sound, an explosion, that had awakened him, or whether it had been some particularly realistic bit of dream. Still, there was a peculiarly dry, rattling clatter, something like hail — and yet the sun was shining — just as he was trying to shake himself thoroughly awake, the sound ceased abruptly.

As he swung himself out of bed, Karsten hurried in. "Hallo, time to get busy, Kent. It has broken loose, the revolution, riot, or whatever it is, shooting, burning. That was machine-gun fire we just heard, from the Aoyama barracks, I take it. Breakfast will be ready for you when you have dressed. You had better make a meal before you start; you're likely to have a strenuous day."

It was difficult to take time for eating, but Karsten insisted. "Won't you come along?" asked Kent. "You should see the excitement." But Karsten shook his head, laughed. "No, to-day, I'm staying home, even if they burn down all of Tokyo." He smiled to Jun-san. She came over to him and placed her hand on his shoulder. Happiness, radiated over these two, made them look younger, an odd appearance of newness, as if they had been refurbished, brightened. A flash of envious admiration came to Kent; after all, though modern life smiled at romance, it was the thing that mattered, woman, affection between the sexes, the one ingredient that could vitalize humdrum existence with the color, the play and sparkle of joy of living. From a distance came the reverbera-

tion of a dull boom; from somewhere near the center of the city a great smoke cloud shot skywards, mushroomed in the still air, dissipated slowly into a thin pall of bluish haze.

He ran into the street. It seemed like a holiday, with the absence of the usual bustle of business. Here and there groups of people, mostly women, chattered excitedly, with a frightened and yet fascinated look on their faces. It reminded him of the aspect the neighborhood took on when there was a fire in the quarter. The street cars were not running. A detachment of police passed him, about a hundred of them, running with their peculiar stiff trot, each with a gloved hand clamped on his short sword, in a long double file.

As he came near the square at Toranomom, he ran into a line of infantrymen, resting stolidly on their rifles, keeping clear the wide space behind them, the quarter containing the Diet building, Foreign Office, the Kasumigaseki Palace and, farther back, the General Staff headquarters. He made his way along a side street hurriedly, avoiding the crowds which had gathered here and there, wherever temple grounds or square afforded a convenient space. There was not so much excitement as he had expected, rather an air of expectancy; they did not appear like people who were engaged at this moment in overthrowing their overlords; rather they seemed eager for the staging of some event which they knew was about to happen, as if they were waiting for a show of daylight fireworks. Still, here and there might be seen small groups of men who seemed to have a definite objective, who were intent on some certain purpose, on going somewhere. It was significant that they all, even the more stolid ones, ran, or walked, or drifted in the same general direction, — towards the govern-

ment building quarter stretching from the central police station at Hibiya to the War Office in a long curve following the outer palace moat and centering on the wide street running from the palace gate at Sakuradamon, near which lay the nerve centers of the Government, the Navy, War and Judiciary buildings, the Diet quarters, and the rest.

The whole movement was too vast, too intangible, covered too much ground to make it possible to handle the story single-handed. They would know more at the *Japan American Office*. He found Carew there, tired-eyed, helping himself to hot, black coffee from a thermos bottle.

"Hallo, Kent," he stretched himself. "Hell, isn't it? Here it is, the big story, the outbreak that we have all been expecting and waiting for for years, the demolishment of the last stronghold in the world of militarism in its old form, perhaps; and here I am, almost idle. There is news popping every minute, big stuff, and there isn't a thing to do with it. The boys are out covering the story as best they can, but what's the use? We can't get out a paper. There is no power for the machines, and, anyway, I have no linotype men, no press crew. You might as well take it easy, too. Tokyo is isolated as far as messages are concerned. The wires are down everywhere. They say the bridges are down on all sides of the city. Even if they weren't, they would not take cable messages, of course. I tried to send one of the boys to Yokohama, hoping he might get a message out by wireless from some steamer, but he just came back. The Kawasaki bridge has been blown up, one span at least, and the military are guarding it and won't let any one pass. Go out and enjoy yourself looking about, but you won't get any news out of here to-day, anyway."



"But what do you make of it?" Carew's stoicism irritated him. "What do you know about it? Is it The Revolution?"

"I don't know." Carew shrugged his shoulders. "Call it anything you please, revolution, riot, overthrow. It is the simultaneous uprising of all the lower classes, the poorer classes, the working classes. It is the explosion of the discontent that has been accumulating for years. It reminds me of a drift of snow that has been growing bigger and bigger, overhanging some steep slope, waiting but for some impetus to start it off. The Mito assassination started it; it is on the way, gathering force every minute, an avalanche that gains growth from the snow that is waiting to add its volume as it rushes onwards. The question now is merely whether the Government can hold it; if the troops will stick by it. That'll tell the whole story."

"Have you any idea how far this is a concerted movement, a planned general movement? Have you gotten anything from the outside?"

"Sure it is part of a general plan to some extent." Carew handed him a sheaf of Nippon Dempo news service flimsies. "These kept coming in until early this morning when everything suddenly stopped. You see how, the moment the news of the Mito assassination came out, hell broke loose in various places. Peasants from one end of Japan to the other, tenant farmers, who have been clamoring at the landlords on account of exorbitant rents, have been burning village offices and landlords' houses. At the same time came strikes, rioting, violence in all the industrial centers, — Osaka, Kobe, Nogoya. At first, when the news began to trickle in last night, I thought it was just like the rice riots in 1918, with breaking of some windows and wrecking of some office buildings and ware-

houses. But it's bigger. It's a sight bigger. I fancy no one knows how big it will grow before it stops, or where it will stop. Go take a look about town, and you'll see they've done a lot of damage already.

"We had a small riot right here a couple of hours ago. I've known right along that one of the linotype men is a Socialist leader of sorts; at least, the police have always come and locked him up whenever the suffrage bill or anything like that came up in the Diet. But when they came early this morning as per usual, some three or four of them, they set upon them, all the printers. They beat the devil out of the policemen and then they beat it. I fancy that's characteristic of the whole situation all over Japan. The worm is turning."

Kent went on to his office a few blocks away. Ishii was there, restless with excitement. "I've been waiting for you, Kent-san. I have a message for you. She came about an hour ago, Adachi-san. She says that if you want to see the best part of the excitement, come to Sakuradamon. She'll probably be there."

Adachi-san! It was like a shock to have her suddenly injected into his life again after all these months. A short time ago, when she had vanished, this news would have caused his heart to beat high with excitement, would have sent him flying to find her — but now, even though he did feel expectancy at seeing her again, curiosity to learn why she had disappeared, where she had been, the predominant feeling was one of uneasiness. That incident, that bit of romance, had been delightful, pungently sweet when thought of as just that, a delectable, charming interlude in the humdrum course of existence; but that was just its main charm, what gave it the subtle flavor of a fanciful dream, its evanescence, the very fact that it had never crystallized into a more lasting, definite

relationship. It had faded out of his life now; what he could treasure as a memory, a whimsical recollection, might be but vitiated, rendered drab and prosaic, should he allow its reality to inject itself, intrudingly, into his life. And then, of course, over and above it all, there was Sylvia.

"We had better go right now." Ishii was nervously eager. "You had better wear your police badge where it can be seen, so we can get through the lines."

"All right, I'm coming." He fastened his police badge, a disk of wood bearing the magic formula which allowed him to pass police cordons, on a string about his neck. Of course, he must see her. After all, it was pathetic, her thinking of him in the midst of all this excitement. He wondered how much she really had to do with it all.

As they approached Hibiya Park the crowds became more dense. He had to display his badge repeatedly to get past lines of police. Excitement was more evident now, and yet the city seemed oddly quiet. He realized that it was the absence of the usual noise of traffic, roar of elevated trains, clatter of street cars. The entire voice of the city had changed; the volume of sound from hundreds of thousands of humans, shuffling along in clacking *geta*, talking, shouting, making an entirely new sound, live, electric, ominous as contrasted with the usual mechanical rattle.

Just in front of the park the police lines were the most solid, thousands of officers backed by mounted gendarmes. They would not let him pass, shrugged shoulders as he tried to argue with them, showing his pass. He worked his way along the line towards the main entrance, hoping to find some opening. He found a young official, pleasantly courteous, who seemed inclined to listen. Suddenly, as he argued, a dull roar sounded behind him, to his right; a gust

of wind, as if a giant had blown a gigantic breath over him and the rest of the crowd. The masses behind him surged forward irresistibly. He noted that the mouth of the young officer had opened, eyes popping, staring as if some astounding, incredible sight had just appeared. As the crowd pushed on, carrying him and the police line before it, he managed to turn and look over the heads of the frantic people milling all about him. As he was borne on, through the entrance into the park, he caught a glimpse of the great central police station to the right behind him. The entire corner was gone, leaving exposed, doll-house rooms in the interior beyond. The usually meticulous bronze figure of some noted police official had been knocked askew by the débris into an absurdly incongruous drunken attitude. Fine dust from the explosion began to settle over them. The crowds, frantically insistent on getting away, had broken through the police lines on all sides, along the broad road between Hibiya Park and the outer moat, and, beyond that, across Babasakimon bridge, into the great space between the inner and outer palace moats, surging towards Sakuradamon. But here in Hibiya Park the police were getting the crowd in hand again, assisted by gendarmes and soldiers who had come from the other side of the square. The mounted men rode their horses right into the crowds; sabers were used freely. The soldiers seemed unenthusiastic, apathetic. Kent noticed that they belonged to some infantry regiment up in the fifties; probably they were country recruits, more in sympathy with the mob than against it. But the others, the police and the gendarmes, were laboring under hysterical excitement. They had always seemed absurd to him, these tiny-looking swords, but quite evidently they were dangerous weapons, viciously sharpened. Some of the superior officers

particularly appeared to have become entirely beside themselves, eyes bloodshot, mouths foaming, literally crazed for the moment, maniacs insane with blood lust.

Kent managed to avoid them by taking the smaller paths leading through shrubbery. The police were all busy raging at the mob, and the soldiers, seeing his police emblem, shrugged shoulders and let him pass. As he worked over towards the other side of the park, in the direction of the navy wireless tower, he became aware of a feeling of emptiness, as if the space, the atmosphere rather, had in some strange way changed, as if it were lighter, more spacious. There was a peculiar acrid tang in the air; he sniffed; yes, that was smoke rising there over the trees. He climbed a low knoll, usually a favorite place for lovers, with a summerhouse surrounded by azaleas. Ah, that was it; where the Diet building had stood, a barn-like, wood and stucco structure, was now no building at all; only smoldering heaps of *débris*. He obtained a moment's amusement by noticing that the cordons of police and soldiers which had been guarding the Diet all these months were still there, on all four sides of the great block, solemnly guarding the smoking ashes.

He swerved to the right, managed to get to the street alongside the outer moat just ahead of the crowd which had broken through the police lines down by the central station. Here, inside the space containing the most important government buildings, were scattered only small detachments of police and soldiers, who did not attempt to face the mob; but beyond, up on the high ground by the War Office and the General Staff headquarters, were sounding bugle calls. Evidently troops were being summoned to form new cordons to take the places of those which had been broken.

By this time he was almost running. He must get

as far as possible into this inner area before new lines were formed. Evidently the same thought possessed the mobs racing behind him. They were surprisingly silent; the predominating sound was the vast volume of clatter made by tens of thousands of wooden *geta*. Just as he was about to pass into the square facing, on its right, the Sakuradamon palace entrance and to the left a great empty lot above which rose the General Staff building, he heard his name being called. "Here, Kent-san. Here I am."

There she was, Sadako-san, with a small group of others, at a vantage point formed by the small space surrounding the pedestal of a statue of a frock-coated gentleman in bronze, set in a corner of the Judiciary building grounds. There were two or three other girls and about a dozen men. He noticed the professor who had been in jail on account of his writings about Kropotkin.

She had been right in picking this point as the center of events. Already they were beginning to concentrate on this spot from all sides, the crowd coming along the Hibiya Park road and that flowing across the space from Babasakimon reinforced by the student contingent from Kanda and the laborers from Asakusa and Uyenno, and even from across the Sumida River, from Honjo and Fukagawa. And apparently they were trying to come on from the other side of the city, too. Up on the higher ground, in the direction of the Sanno-dai Temple grounds, a hilly park often used for demonstrations, came sound of musketry, volley firing. Bugles still sounded about the General Staff headquarters grounds and, behind that, on the hill crowned by the War Office. Bugles also began to sound from across the moat, inside the inner palace grounds. Still, oddly, there was no sight of soldiers or police; the crowds continued to surge on into the

square, gradually filling it. On the other side the multitude was evidently being kept in check by some cordon which they could not see, at Toranomom probably. A few small groups, individual figures here and there, evidently Foreign Office officials or men from the Italian or Russian embassies close by, were moving along rapidly, evidently to see the excitement. Presently Kent saw Kikuchi. He shouted to him, managed to attract his attention. As he joined their group, Kent noticed a stir among the others, frowns, whispers, then shoulder shrugs; but no protest was made.

But he wanted to see Sadako-san, to have a few words with her, at least. He managed to draw her aside a little, sheltered against the pedestal of the statue. "Sadako-san, where have you been? That wasn't the right thing to do, to run away from me like that. You know, I've ——"

"Oh, Kent-san, you must not think that that was what I asked you to come here for, to talk nonsense, on a day like this — no, not nonsense, forgive me. I didn't mean that. We'll talk about — about these other things some other time — yes, I promise — but to-day; don't you see, this is the day we have all been waiting for so long, the day marking the birth of a new Japan, when the people of Japan shall break down the rule of the tyrants, of the wicked, old anachronists over there," she pointed across the square to the gray, copper-roofed building of the General Staff. "That's why I asked you to come here, to this spot; for this is where history is to be made to-day."

It flashed on him that she made a picture as she stood there, exquisite in her soft-tinted kimono, eyes flashing, cheeks flushed. She seemed as if she might be emblematic, a figure representative of the new Japanese idealism, standing side by side with this bronze frock-coated individual, a nice old respectable bureau-

crat no doubt, whoever he might be; the two, the breathing, pulsating girl and the cold, stiff bronze man, symbolic of Japan of to-day, the contrast. Still, why did she insist on taking part in this mad medley of mob passion? How much happier she would be — Recollection came to him of some of their excursions together. But, of course, that could be no longer. The thought came to him suddenly — it was fortunate that she had refused to discuss personal topics. That was just like him, saying things without thinking. He had not intended to recall their affair, matters of affection; still, of course, he could see now how it must have seemed to her that he was trying to do so.

The crowd kept surging into the square, which was gradually filling. It began to become monotonous; nothing happened; it did not look as if anything was even about to happen; one became impatient, disappointed with the sense of constantly baffled expectation. Evidently the "revolution" was about to fizzle and splutter into extinction without dramatic dénouement. Did it have any intention whatever, this mob? What was the idea of the whole thing? "What is going to happen, Sadako-san? What are you people going to do? Is all this disturbance throughout Japan a planned, concerted movement, or is it just accidental, spontaneous outbreaks caused by the death of the Premier?"

"Both, in a way." She showed her pleasure at being able to instruct him. "We have been waiting for many months for this to happen, we radicals, thousands of us, scattered through all of Japan. Everywhere where there was dissatisfaction, among the tenant farmers in all the country districts, among the industrial laborers and all the other poor people in the cities, in fact, everywhere in Japan we had our leaders, a few here and a few there; only a few were



needed in each place; conditions have made the people, the whole nation almost, ready to strike if only some one gave a start. They all knew, we all knew, that some day the great event would occur which would be the signal for our men to lead revolts throughout Japan. We all knew that it would happen some day, to-morrow, in a month, in a year, but when we didn't know, or possibly only the very few leaders. The police knew, too, that it would happen sometime; but that was just what baffled them; what prevented them from making an end to the business, the utter uncertainty of it all. They could not keep all of us, the thousands and thousands on their suspect lists, locked up all the time. So we all waited, we and the police, for the event that would be the signal, and when they killed that poor fool Mito, we all knew that the time had come. But the police could not move fast enough. Do you know that all bridges and wires are down all about Tokyo? They have had to send their best troops to Korea and Manchuria for their schemes there. They couldn't depend on most of the army for imperialist schemes, ever since the Siberian scandal. So now there is in Tokyo only the First Regiment, the Imperial Guards, who'll be loyal to the General Staff. And do you think that they can stop us?" She stretched her hand out towards the crowding thousands in the square before them. "Do you think one regiment can stop them?"

"But what is it that you are going to do? Why are all these people coming here? What's the big purpose?"

"Why, overthrow, of course." She almost shouted in her impatience. "We shall turn them out, the General Staff, the bureaucrats; then we shall — anyway, we shall overthrow the Government."

He shrugged his shoulders wearily. Always, in beer

hall, or public square, or radical magazine, these students, professors, theorists, revolutionists, always ranting about the "overthrow" without an idea of what must follow. Impatience overcame him. It all seemed so futile, silly, even the big events, the assassination of the Premier, the burning of the Diet building and the rest, purposeless, childish destruction, leading nowhere.

"Well, suppose you do overthrow it all, what then? Do you want to be like Russia?"

"What's the matter with Russia then?" The voice, masculine, faintly familiar, came from right behind him. He turned resentfully. Who the devil could this be, eavesdropping? It was Lüttich. He had seen the Russian only a few times since the days when they were fellow-travelers on the *Tenyo Maru*. He had supposed that he was teaching the violin, dancing, French and other polite accomplishments to the aristocracy. What was he doing here, evidently hand in glove with the revolutionists? And what the devil business had he to butt in on them?

"The last time I talked politics with you, Lüttich," he spoke with studied sarcasm, that the others might hear, "you seemed to have lots to say against the present government of Russia."

"Of course," the other laughed scornfully. "What chance do you think a Russian would have living in Japan unless he sang just that tune? But, good Lord, man, did you really think that I'd content myself with that, with being a dancing master, and in these times. These are the times to live in, Kent. Think of it, a few years ago, Petrograd, and now here, to-day, Tokyo! And to have a hand in it all! Did you see the police station, Kent-san? What did you think of it?"

"I'll tell you what I think of ——"

"Look, listen," she had gripped his arm. Across the square, on the hill of the General Staff building, something was in motion. The Kropotkin professor had a field glass which was being passed round. Kent, in his turn, caught a glimpse of the scene in front of the building, a solitary figure in the middle, and lower down, in front of it, files of soldiers. He passed the glass on to Kikuchi.

"My God, Kent-san," Kikuchi handed it back to him. "Take another look. 'Don't you see, it's him, the Devil himself, General Matsu, chief of the General Staff."

From the top of the hill the bugle sounded again. A roar, explosions from all sides, flashes from the other side of the moat, from the ramparts of the palace grounds, from the top of the hill. Then, abruptly, a moment of silence, of bewilderment, sudden occurrence and sudden cessation of the sound having a theatrical effect, as if a pianist had finished a rather tedious composition with a sudden sweep of hand crashing across the full stretch of bass octaves. It stunned them, and the crowd stood dumb, numbed, unbelieving. Then it was as if at precisely the same instant the full meaning of what had happened came to all, a revelation of despair; they were surrounded, troops on all sides, hemmed them in, tens of thousands. From all sides they crowded, milling against the center, seeking escape. Kent pushed the girl before him, up towards the top of the pedestal, he and the rest climbing up its terraced sides to avoid the sea of humanity surging frantically about them. Whimsically, there came to his mind a picture from the Doré Bible, a picture of the flood, a group of humans and animals seeking on an isolated rocky peak escape from the rising waters.

"Damn them, they have some sense yet, these mili-

tarists," there was a note of admiration in the voice of the Russian. "Here they have managed to trap the best part of the country's radical leaders, half of them at least. I wonder if ——"

From the hill top came the notes of the bugle, clear, unfaltering, like a maneuver call. Immediately another crash of rifles, just one volley. They were shooting more accurately this time, or the officers were compelling the men to do so. All along the edges of the mob they were falling, men and women, children even, rolling down the steep slopes into the moat, or falling under the feet of the mass, milling about, stampeded, driven in upon itself from all sides. Now the multitude had found its voice, but it was inarticulate, shrieks, cries and groans mingling into a vast volume of sound, meaningless, inhuman.

Another half minute. Again the bugle, followed by a single volley. Another half minute, another volley. The crowd was like insane creatures, those at the edges fighting their way in, those in the middle struggling frantically to escape, and, every thirty seconds, the bugle call, and the single sharp volley, with military precision, from all sides.

"I didn't think they had it in them, that they had that much imagination," there was open admiration in the Russian's tone now. "Don't you see it, Kent-san, the devilish cleverness of it all. It's not the shooting that's the worst; it's the suspense, the waiting, the bugle call and the knowledge of the death that comes with it. That's what they will remember to their dying day, all those who escape, if they let any one escape. That'll take the heart out of them. Such is life, the life of a revolutionist, Kent-san. They're setting us back ten years to-day, damn them, but we'll get them in the end."

Time had come for the next bugle call. It seemed

overdue, a longer interval than before. They almost wanted it to come, to have it over with. Surely the interval was long. They began to glance about, at one another. Was it possible? Face peered anxiously into face, each seeking to read confirmation of his own hope. Had the killing really ceased, or was this but another refinement of cruelty?

"No, it's over; they've finished; the soldiers are retiring." It was the professor with the field glass. At the same time there came from in front of them, like a ripple of sound passing rapidly, quaveringly, through the mob, a whisper, then the rumor spoken aloud but in the doubting tone of unbelief; finally in shouts: "The Prince Regent, the Prince Regent. He stopped it. He told the militarists that he would not have them kill His people. His people. The Prince Regent!"

The emotions of the crowds were still too conflicting to allow definite united form of expression, joy, sorrow, relief. The cries of the dying and wounded became audible now to the individuals, who until this had been concerned only with their own frantic fears, listening for the death-signaling bugle. Evidently the cordons about Hibiya had been withdrawn, for the crowd became suddenly augmented. New arrivals who had not been set trembling by suspense of expectation of death, saw the dead, raised their hands in wrath. Shouts for vengeance, cries from the wounded, trembling hysteria of those who had escaped the debacle all mingled in a chaos of confusion of sound, of movement, of minds.

"Now's the time, you fools," Kent heard the Russian's hoarse whisper to those about him. "In this moment you win or lose the revolution. All that's needed now is a leader. Come on, lead them, demolish the General Staff. Here, take some of these." Kent

caught a glimpse of dark lemon-shaped objects, with crisscross furrows, as they passed from hand to hand. "I don't suppose you want one," he grinned to Kent. "You don't know how much history there may be crammed into one of these little things. Anyway, come along."

The others had already started, making their way through the mob. The professors and the rest, Sadako-san, Ishii, even Kikuchi. He caught the young diplomat's arm. "What the devil are you doing in this, Kikuchi? You had better get back to the Foreign Office where you belong."

"Don't be a fool, Kent, don't be a fool," the young fellow's face was ecstatic, eyes brilliantly flashing. "Don't you see it, Kent? He is with us, the Prince Regent, with the people. He must be at the Kasumigaseki Palace, right across the way from the General Staff building. He must have seen with his own eyes almost, and he stopped them. He is with us, the people; what in hell does it matter whether we be Foreign Office mannikins or proletariat; we all are the people of Japan, the nation, and we all want just that one thing, the overthrow of the militarists and of the bureaucrats."

They had reached the edge of the mob at the foot of the wide driveway leading to the General Staff building. Most of the soldiers had disappeared; only a thin cordon guarded the approach. Behind them, scattered in the throng, they could hear voices of leaders shouting. "To the General Staff; this way; throw them out; to the General Staff!" The cry was taken up; it became a roar; again the mob took common direction. Presently they found themselves in the front rank, pressed steadily forwards by the urge of the multitude behind them. Kent was pushed upwards with the rest of the group, Sadako-san,

Kikuchi, Ishii, Lüttich and the others, closer and closer to the line of soldiers, being driven steadily nearer the extended bayonet points. The officer in charge, a captain, Prussian-mustached, scowling at the advancing crowd, was directly in front of them. They could see him biting his lips, finger nervously playing about his automatic, suspense, indecision, plainly written on his face. A stone thrown by some one in the crowd whizzed past him. Kent heard him bark out something, some order; instantly the rifles of the soldiers had leaped into position at their shoulders. By the gods, they were about to fire!

Those in the front rank of the mob tried to push backwards, but were held fast by those behind. Instinctively Kent placed his arm about Sadako, glaring up at the soldiers. Another gruff military order was barked out, hoarse, unintelligible. The rifles came to rest. The soldiers began to retreat slowly. "That was Matsu himself gave that order." Kent heard the excited whisper of Kikuchi right in his ear. "That's one thing about these militarists, at least. They obey orders. Look, there he is."

He had come forward, an old man in field uniform with a single great silver decoration, almost as large as a saucer, below his breast. He was waving back, impatiently, other officers who evidently wished to stay with him, barked out some command to them imperiously. Then he turned, facing the mob, white-haired head erect, hand on sword hilt, silent, proud, impressive.

"By the gods, they are no cowards, anyway, these militarists," Kent flung the words back over his shoulder to Kikuchi. "One man against a nation."

"He accepts the responsibility. What else can he do?" The old Japanese formula, the gentleman's creed.

Those in the front rank tried to hold back, impressed, awed at this solitary old man, glaring at them defiantly through steel-rimmed spectacles. But those behind pressed on. Stones began to fly; suddenly a shot sounded from the right. The general slumped into a heap; he tried to raise one hand, collapsed, was quiet.

The captain of the cordon swung about, facing the crowd, face twitching, teeth bared like a snarling beast. Eyes popping, he waved his heavy automatic at those in front, yelling at them maniacally. "Cowards, scum, animals." He was plainly entirely mad. "Yes, and women too; take that!"

The gun spat directly at Sadako, within a couple of feet of her breast. Kent felt her become limp suddenly in his arm. As he clung to her, he sensed something hard worming itself in from behind between him and the girl. Damn it! He struggled for room in the mob. A dull roar of sound, powerful, stunned him as if an impact had suddenly pressed against his side. Dazedly, as through a blur, he saw the figure of the captain reel backwards, pistol sagging, then tumbling into a heap. A roar went up from the mob behind them. The surge forward became insistent. A few of them, Kent, Kikuchi, Ishii, managed to hold up the girl, as the multitude rushed on past them.

"Here, to the left." Kikuchi was breaking a way. "Let us bring her to my office. We can take her in through the side gate just across the way."

They battled their way through the mob slowly, desperately. From above came the roar of sound, clamor of the crowd, explosions. Just as they were about to reach the side gate, Lüttich appeared, hatless, wild-eyed.

"Here, there's not time for this." He caught the shoulder of one of the Japanese, a burly labor leader.



"They have fired the General Staff building; now is the time for a clean sweep. Come on, help lead them to the palace, the Emperor's palace."

"The palace!" The man stared at the Russian, mouth open, dumbfounded. "The Emperor!" Then, as realization suddenly dawned on him, he crashed his fist into the other's face. "Fool, beast!"

The Russian stepped back, bumped into Kent. In his astonishment he did not seem to notice the physical pain. "And that's the crowd I've been making bombs for; can you ——"

He was swept away by the throng. They managed to gain the Foreign Office grounds, carried the girl to Kikuchi's office and placed her on a lounge. Kent pulled away the *eri* neckband and the upper part of the kimono. There it was, in the left breast, blue-black against the whiteness, a small spot, a few drops of blood. She seemed unconscious, groaned but a little.

"Here, Ishii." Kikuchi took charge. "There should be a doctor at the American Embassy on a day like this. Get out through the entrance on the other side, across the tennis court and through Sannencho Lane. If any one stops you, show them this Foreign Office seal on the envelope. Here," he turned to Kent. "Sign this. I'm asking them to send a doctor over here."

Apparently all the Foreign Office people had gathered in the main building. In this wing it was quiet, but with a roaring background of sound, as of surf pounding on rocks, the clamor of the mob outside. The girl stirred, opened her eyes. "Hugh-san," her hand faltered towards him. "It's good you're here, Hugh-san."

"What's that; so she's a friend of yours, Kent." But Kikuchi received no answer. He looked at the

other, who had thrown himself in front of the couch, leaning over the girl; then he tiptoed out of the room.

The girl had fallen into a stupor again. From outside a roaring crackle became louder and louder. The windows crimsoned with vitreous red glitter.

"Hugh-san," she was trying to raise her head, the voice faint, dreamy. "See, sunrise over the mountains again; but I want to sleep some more, I'm tired." Poor little girl, evidently her mind was back in Hakone. "Hugh-san, sing some more," her hand falteringly sought his. "Sing the 'rock-a-by baby' song again."

"Yes, yes, go to sleep, dear. You'll be all right presently; but now you must just sleep." He smoothed her hair.

"Yes, I'll sleep; but you must sing to me, Hugh-san." The weak voice was insistent.

Sing! Must this damned grotesque inspiration pursue him even into the shadow of death! It was monstrous, impossible, this necessity of drooling nursery nonsense in the very shadow of racking tragedy. He cleared his voice, contrived a croaking sound, choked, tried again, managed it. Leaning forward over her, he intoned his miserable ditty. "Rock-a-by, baby ——" he began even to find a sort of comfort in it, the monotonous repetition of the meaningless stanzas; kept droning them mechanically, endlessly, — "when the wind blows the cradle will rock ——" The impression of a large, white hand on the girl's breast just before him took form in his mind. He looked up. It was the new doctor from St. Luke's.

"Unless you are singing for your own edification, Mr. Kent, you might as well stop." The voice was cold, registered the young man's intense disapproval. "This girl is dead, stone dead."

He stared. It was, of course, what he had expected;

still the announcement, the definite irrevocableness thereof stunned him. A new figure, a woman's, came into the field of his vision. Sylvia. He stretched out his hand to her.

They stood there, hand in hand, he and Sylvia, gazing at the dead girl. "The poor, dear little thing." There were tears in the girl's voice. "How beautiful she is."

"Beautiful." The thought came to him of the peculiarly luminous radiance of her eyes. "That's just what makes me so sick of this whole thing, Sylvia, the wanton waste and destruction of the process of compelling the grace and beauty of Japan into the cramping forms of our civilization: that it is these women, these girls who must suffer. What do I care for the men, even the young boys, who have been slaughtered to-day! That's part of the game, man's price for that which we call progress of civilization. That's all right. But these girls, these infinitely delicate and beautiful beings, made for sunlight, and fragrance, and flowers; but they are drawn, attracted into the whirl and whirr of the wheels of our civilization, and they hurt them, tear and mangle them, in mind, in spirit, or in body, and cast them forth." He stared misty-eyed at the figure before them, with its bright crimson *obi* band, delicately tinted kimono sleeve drooping outspread towards the floor. "Like that, dead, crushed — broken butterflies."

Outside, the tumult and clamor of the mob was increasing. All were facing the palace gate at Sakuradamon. "*Banzai*." The cry came from those on the bridge. "*Banzai*. Long live the Emperor. Long live Japan. *Banzai*." The roar was taken up by the other thousands, rose heavenwards, about the rumble and crackle from the flaming furnace of the General Staff building.

Kikuchi slammed open the window. "Come on," he turned to Kent, ecstatic, strident-voiced. "We have won. The tyrants are finished. Now we shall build up Japan, make it a great nation, the Emperor and the people together. *Banzai*." He threw his arm around the shoulder of Ishii. Together they leaned far out of the window, aristocrat and office boy, their voices blending with the thunderous pæan of the multitude:

*"Banzai, banzai."*

END

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